As the flames draw nearer, the fire gets hotter. Ronin assassin Ogami Itto seeks to learn what's written on the secret messages from the corrupt Yagyu clan to the Shogun and leaves a river of blood in his path. Elsewhere, a shamed woman attempts to force her husband to name his own child, but his job and honor stand in the way. Little cub Daigoro makes a new friend in another samurai fated to *seppuku* — ritual suicide — and defends the honor of a young playmate. The world keeps turning as the Lone Wolf and his Cub wander the land seeking revenge and answers, the questions to which are written in blood and glowing ink.

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KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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DAY OF THE DEMONS

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME

14

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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the sixty-ninth

One Rainy Day

SPRSH
SPLSH

HISHŪ
TAKAYAMA
DAIKANSHO.
SPLSH
SPLSH
WH-WHO
GOES
THERE?!
WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?!

FWWP
WHSSH
NGYAHHH!
SKLSSH
HRKK!
SHUKK

WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?!
CHUKK
HNGGAHH!!
TO... TO ARMS...!
AH?!
WHO'S THAT?!
TO ARMS!! TO ARMS!!
INTRUDER INSIDE THE GATES!!

SKRSSH
SHUKK

IS IT AN ICHITPI!
NO! HE'S ALONE!
KILL HIM!!
CUT HIM DOWN!!

YOU'RE KIKOSAKA OSABE?!
YOU BLOOD-CRAZED *LUNATIC!*
WHO ARE *YOU!?*
HARADA ZENBĒ, *RŌNIN!* I COME ON BEHALF OF THE PEASANTS OF THE TWENTY-SIX VILLAGES OF HISHŪ TAKAYAMA, WHO SUFFER THE AGONIES OF *HELL* BECAUSE OF *YOU!*
IN THE NAME OF *HEAVEN IT'SELF*, I SHALL STRIKE YOU DOWN AND *END* YOUR BRUTAL RULE!
IMPUDENT *CUR!*
KILL HIM! MAKE HIM *PAY!!*

GKK!
CHOK
NNG..!
THUKK
AGHK!
SKSSH
RRG! K-KILL HIM!!
HE'S JUST ONE MAN, DAMN IT! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!

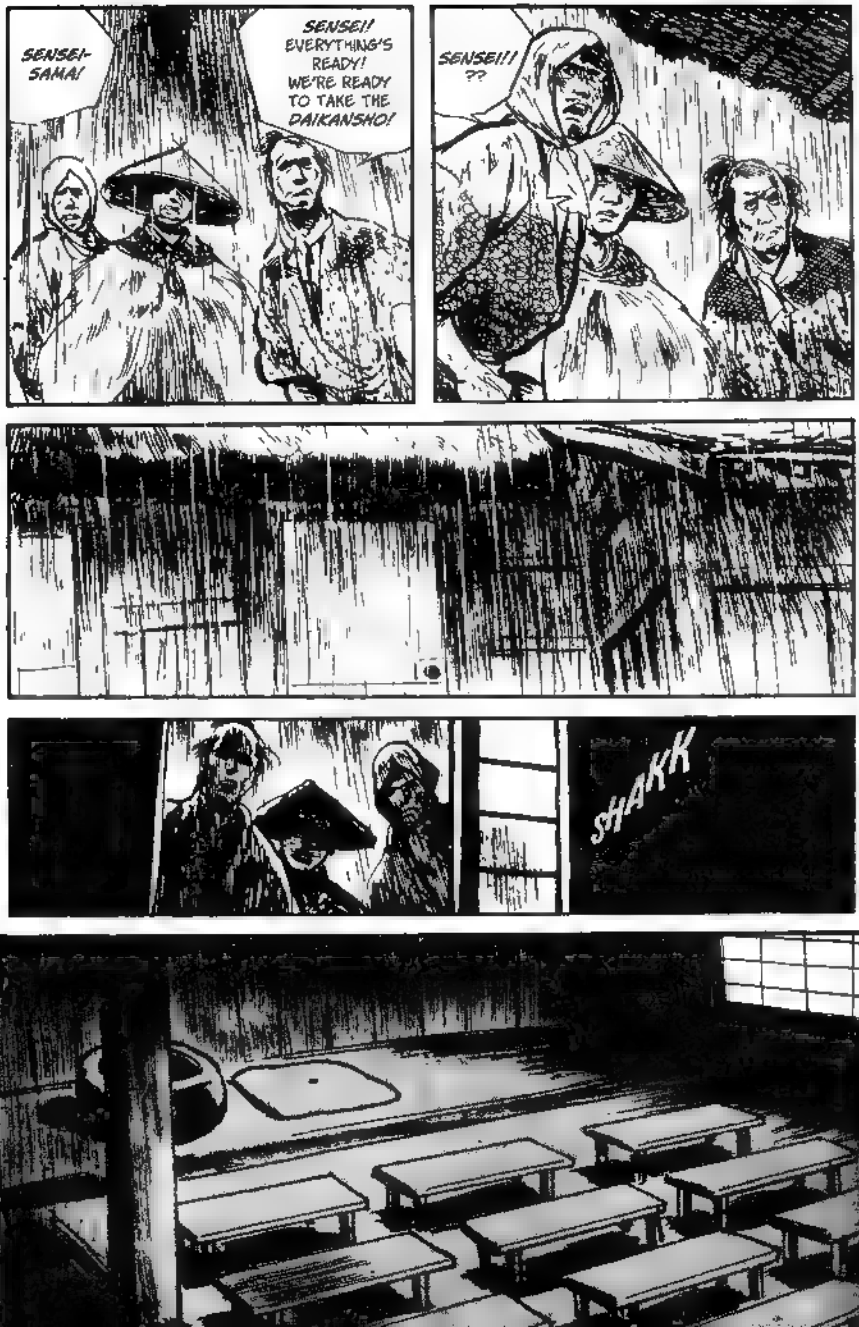
SHUKK
KSHINNG
SKCSSH
WHERE ARE THE MUSKET TROOPS?!
IT IT'S THE RAIN, SIR! THE FUSES.
DAMN IT!!

AGHH!
SKRSSH
KTANGG
NNK!
AUGH!
SHCHOK

D DAMN YOU!
HIKOSAKA OSABE! HEAR YOUR SINS!
THROUGH FLOOD AND THROUGH DROUGHT THROUGH FOUR YEARS OF BAD HARVESTS, YOU HAVE THOUGHT ONLY OF HOW TO USE YOUR POST FOR PROMOTION TO GUNDAI!
RAISING TAXES TO IMPRESS YOUR SUPERIORS! PROFITING FROM THE SUFFERING OF THE PEASANTRY!
YOUR BRUTAL TITHES HAVE PUSHED THE PEASANTS TO STARVATION!
THE CRIES OF THE SUFFERING FILL HISHŪ FROM BORDER TO BORDER THE PEASANTS ARE ON THE VERGE OF REVOLT!
YET YOU DELIBERATELY OVERESTIMATE THE HARVEST TO FATTEN YOUR TAX COFFERS! YOUR GREED DEFIES BELIEF! YOU'RE INCOMPETENT TO GOVERN!!

AND SO— IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE
I RENDER JUDGE-MENT!
KANNNG
SHNGG
NNGRNI
SKLGGH
SPICH

SCHOOL

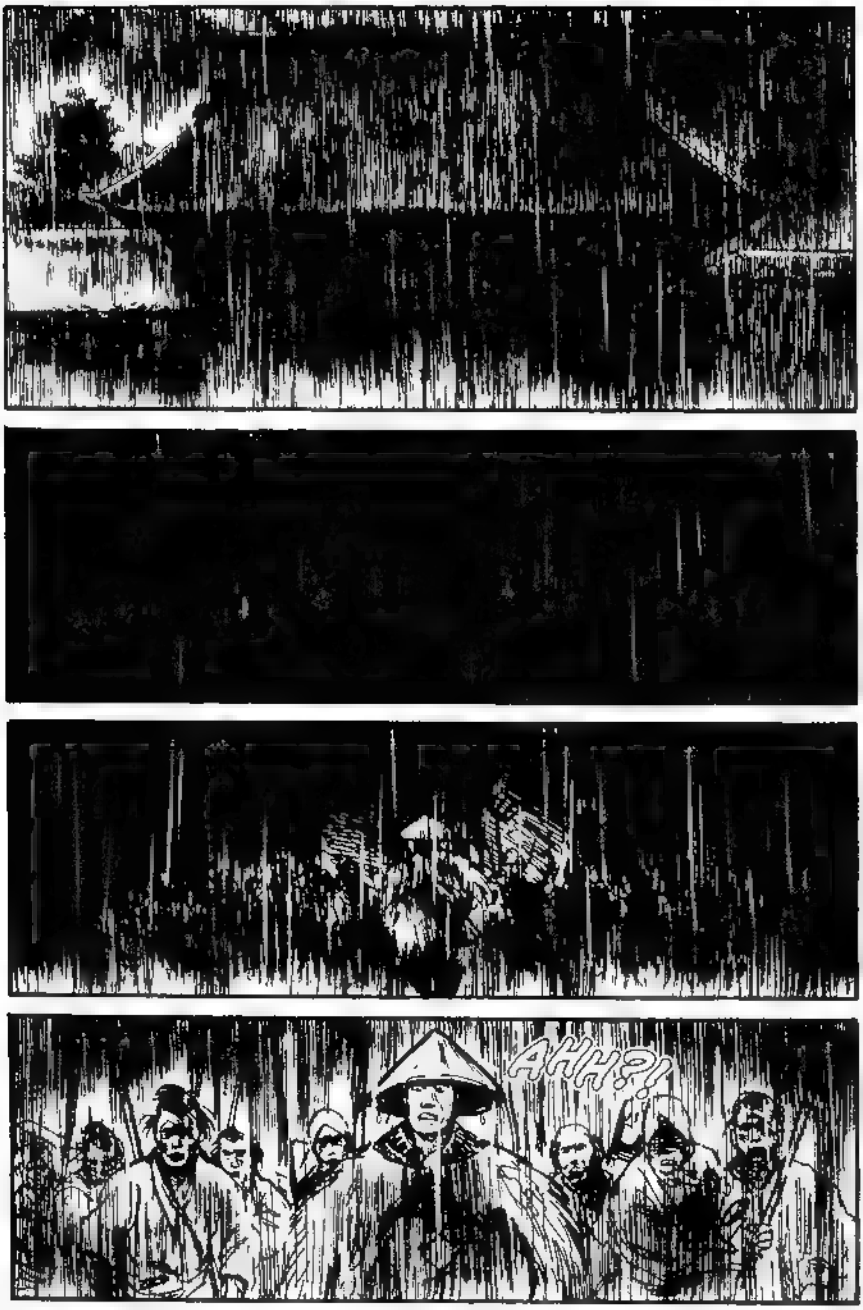

SENSEI-SAMA!
SENSE!! EVERYTHING'S READY! WE'RE READY TO TAKE THE DAIKANSHO!
SENSEI!! ??
SHAKK

SANSHI
...?!

O-OKUSAMA!
WE'RE TOO LATE!
THE SENSEI'S GONE BY HIMSELF!
HE'S GONE TO ATTACK THE DAIKANSHO ALONE!

THE SENSEI'S WIFE AND THE LITTLE MASTER..
..HAVE KILLED THEMSELVES!
H-HURRY! EVERYONE! TO THE DAIKANSHO!
RYAHHH!
HYAHHH!

KAKKK
BOM
BOM
RYAAAAH!


AHH?!

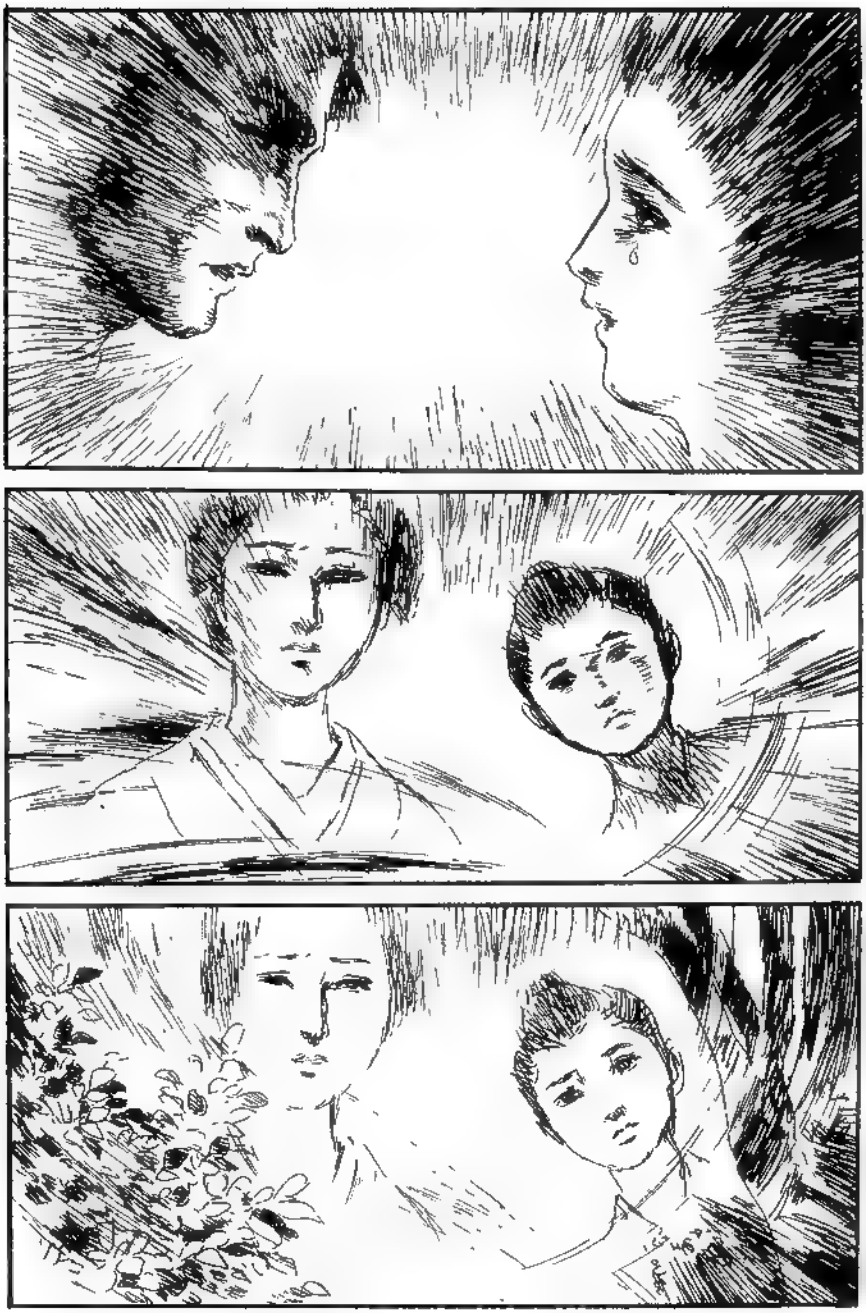
HALT!! LISTEN WELL!
YOU MUST NOT ADVANCE ONE STEP FURTHER! I HAVE EXECUTED HIKOSAKA OSABE!
I, HARADA ZENBÉ, KILLED HIM ALONE! YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT!
THERE WAS NO IKKI! UNDERSTAND?!

S-SEN-SEI!
SENSEI! YOU CAN'T TAKE THE BLAME ON YOUR SHOULDERS ALONE! WE MUST SHARE IT
HE'S RIGHT!
PLEASE, SENSEI!
WE'RE GUILTY, TOO!
SHÖYA-DONO!
MY FAMILY AND I HAVE SURVIVED ON THE SELFLESS GENEROSITY OF ALL OF YOU! IT WAS TIME TO REPAY THE DEBT!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING SENSEI!? WE OWE YOU! YOU'VE TAUGHT US TO READ AND WRITE! YOU'VE INSTRUCTED US IN ETIQUETTE AND MANNERS YOU'VE—
THE PEASANTS GROW THE RICE, THE SAMURAI PROTECTS THE PEASANTS! I FOLLOW THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI!
IF I TAKE ALL THE GUILT, NOTHING IS LOST BUT IF YOU ARE BLAMED, THEN WHO WILL GROW THE RICE?!

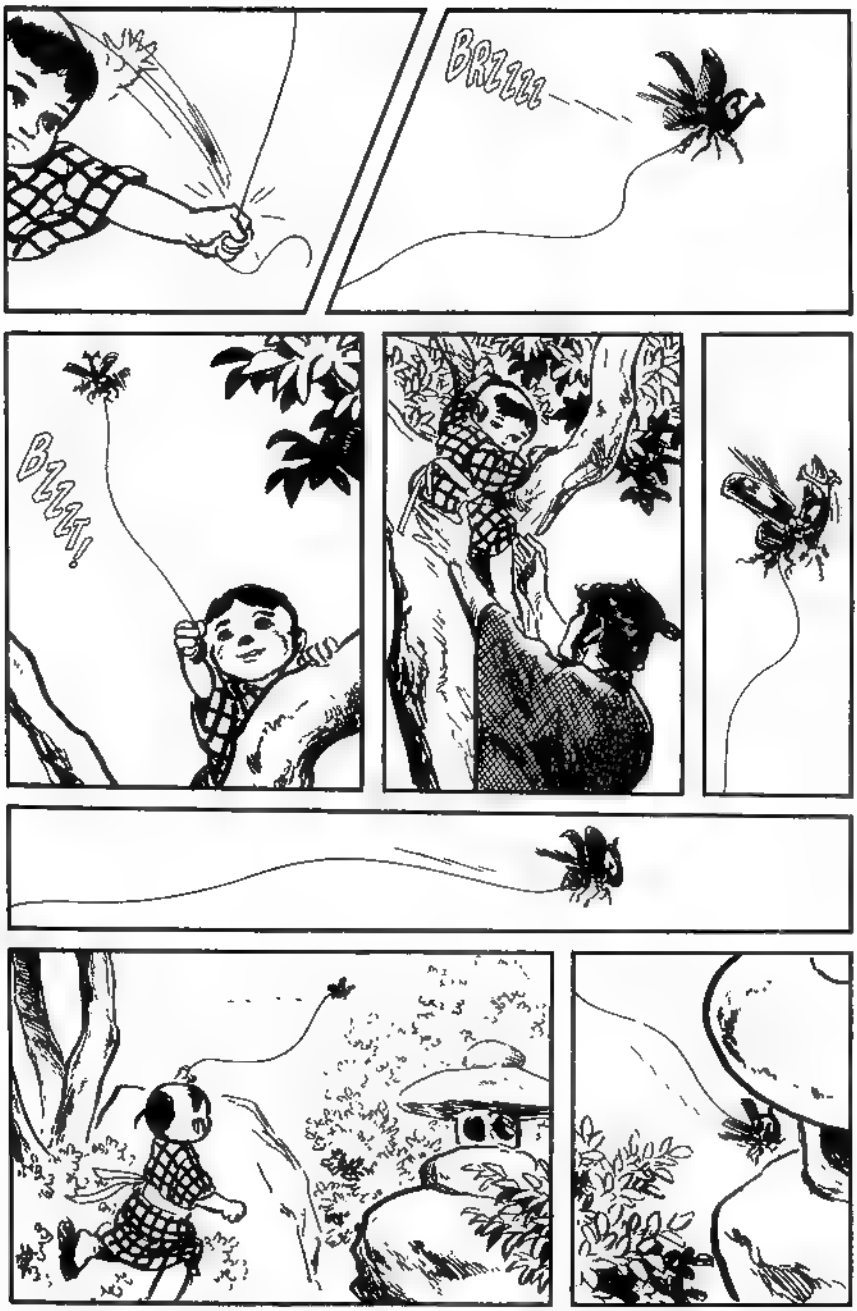
JUST OR NOT, IF YOU REBEL AGAINST EDO, SCORES OF YOU WILL BE SENTENCED TO DEATH!
LET THE WEIGHT OF THIS DEED FALL UPON ME ALONE!
S-SENSEI!
SENSEI ...!!
SENSEI... ....
DESPAIR NOT! KNOW THAT I AM FILLED WITH JOY, FOR IN DEATH I FLOWER AS A SAMURAI!
[illegible]

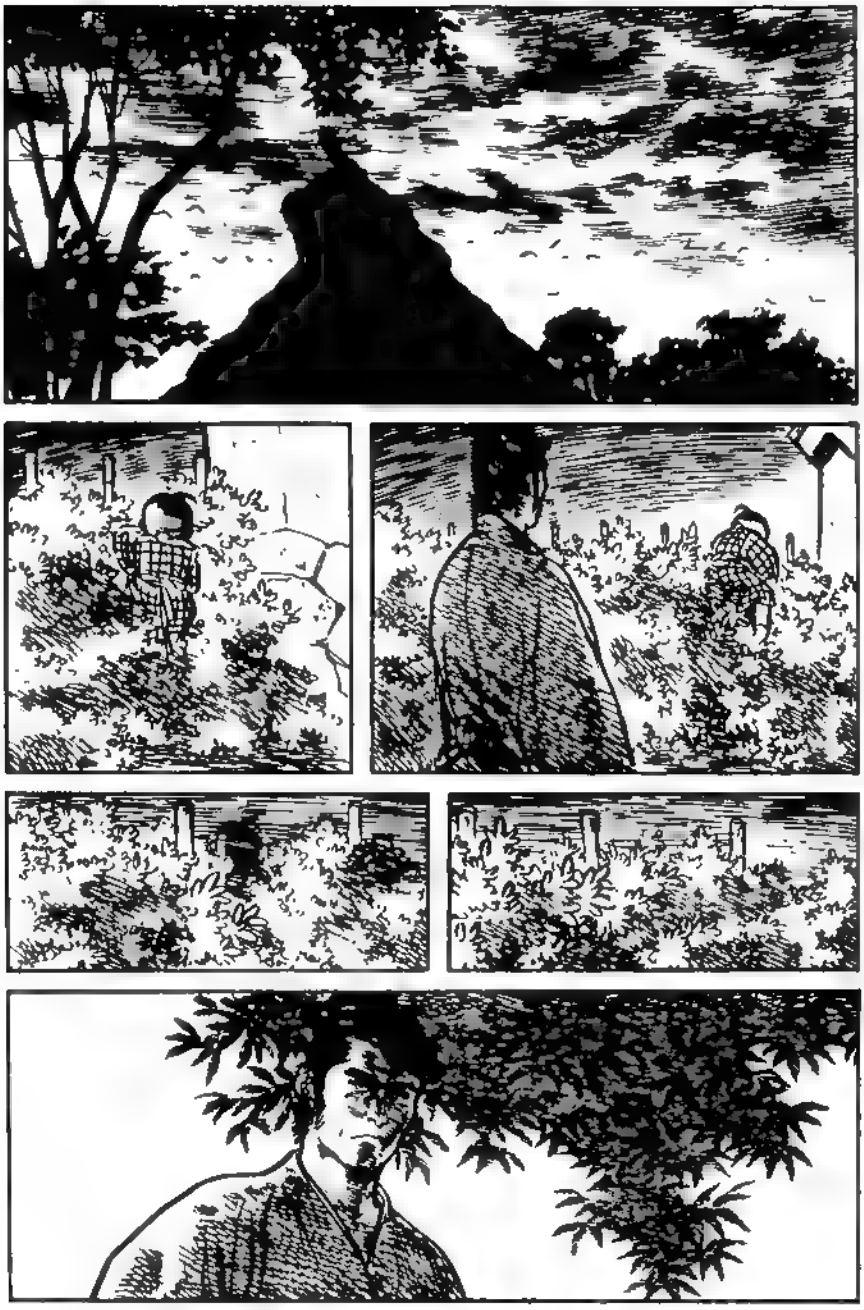
HARADA ZENBÉ! YOU HAVE MURDERED DAIKAN HIKOSAKA OSABE, HIS GUARDS AND OFFICIALS. YOUR CRIME IS GREAT AND BEYOND FORGIVENESS. I SENTENCE YOU TO DEATH.
YET IT IS CLEAR THAT OFFICIAL NEGLIGENCE ALSO INVITED THIS CATASTROPHE, AND THAT DAIKAN HIKOSAKA PERSONALLY ABUSED HIS MANDATE.
IN EXPOSING HIS CRIMES, IN TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE, IN ACCEPTING THE PENALTY FOR YOUR ACTIONS, UP TO AND INCLUDING DEATH FOR YOUR WIFE AND ONLY SON, YOUR BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN IN ALL WAYS

FURTHER, YOU HAVE PREVENTED A PEASANT *ICKI* AND SO, IN LIGHT OF THESE MITIGATING FACTORS, I REDUCE YOUR SENTENCE BY ONE DEGREE.
YOU SHALL BE PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN THE HOME OF THE *MEISAKU* TODA, AND ALLOWED TO DIE BY *SEPPUKU*
I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR MERCY



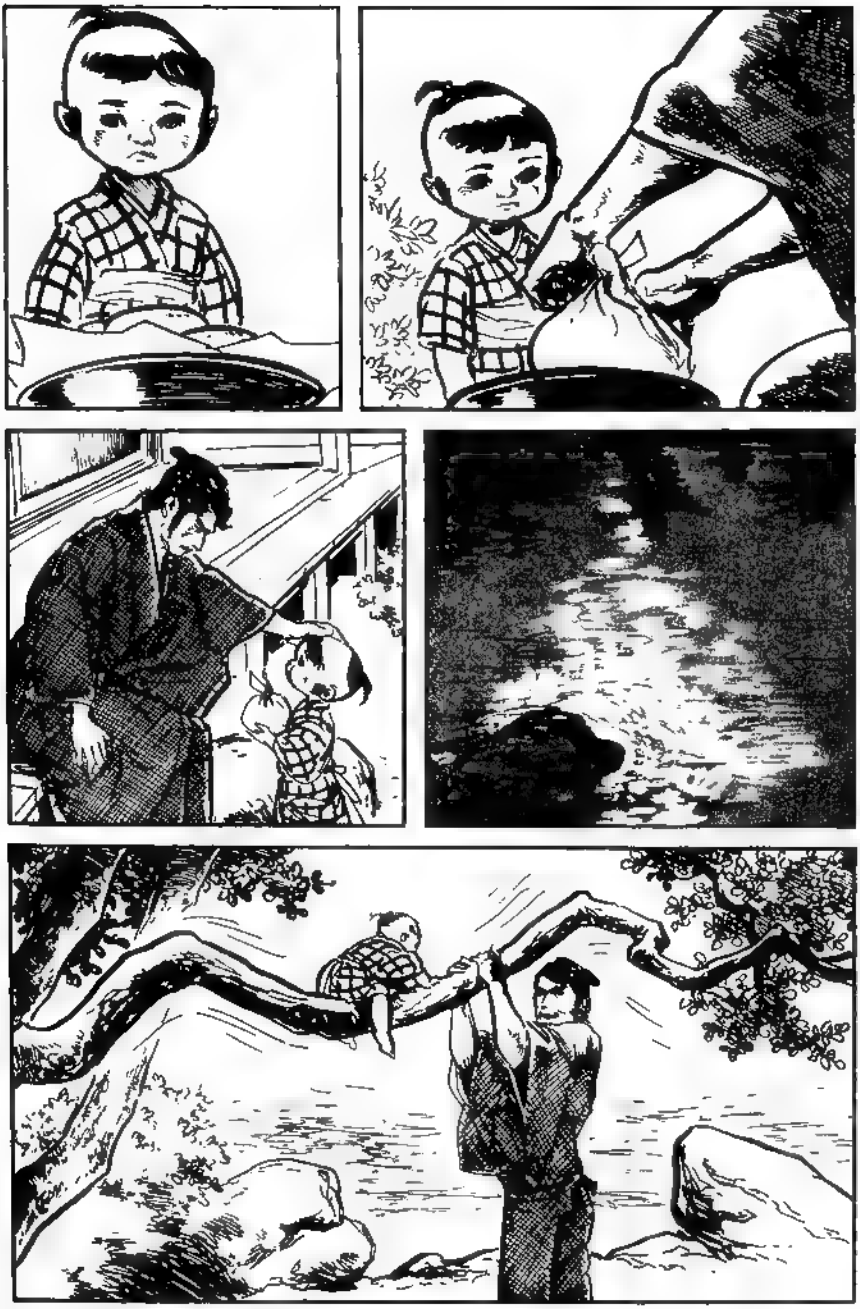
BRZZZ
KRASH
SPRASH


BRZzz
BZZT!



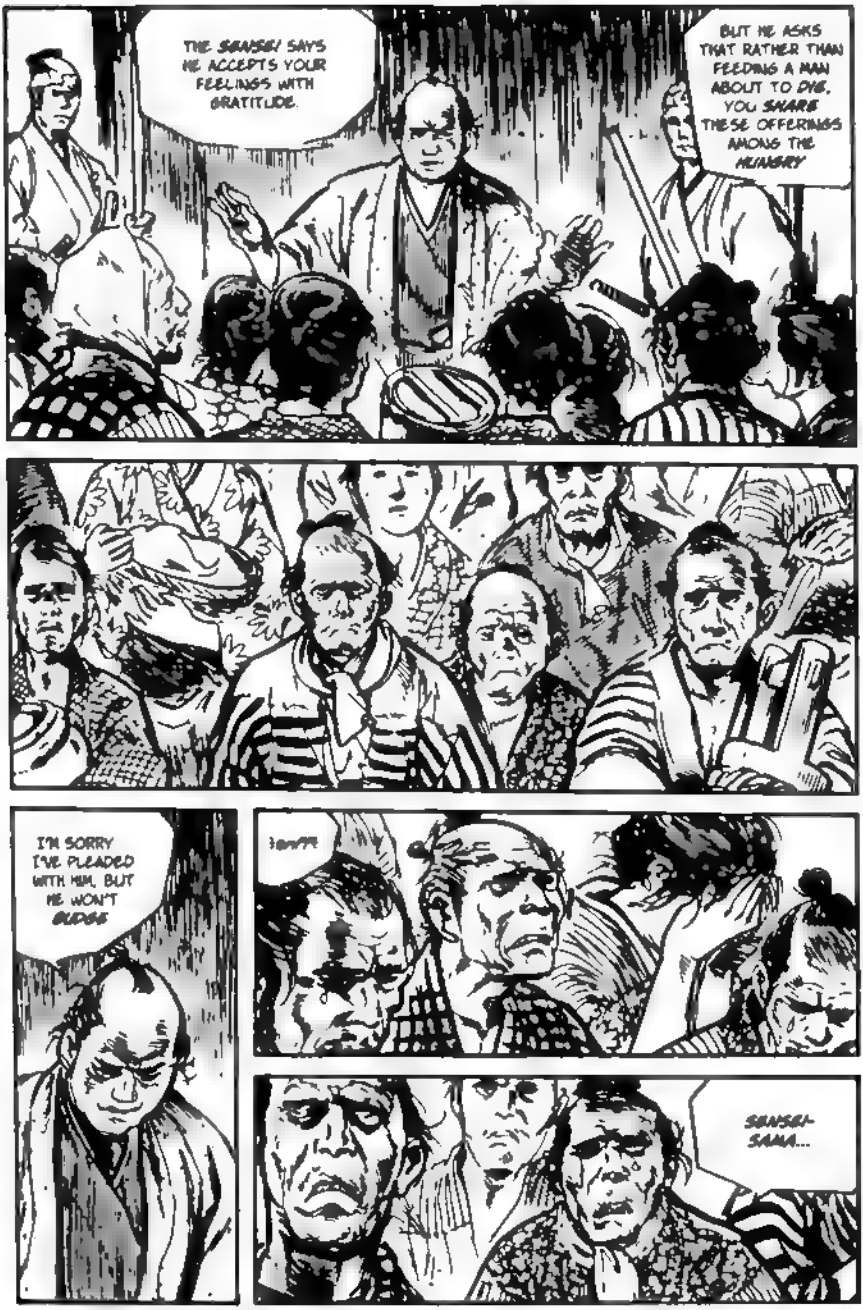
IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU WANT, JUST SPEAK.
THIS IS MORE THAN ENOUGH.
WHY SHOULD ONE WHO GOES TO DIE EAT RICHLY IN A TIME OF HUNGER? I NEED ONLY A LITTLE SOUP, A FEW VEGETABLES.
S-SENSEI...
THE PEOPLE ARE PRAYING THAT YOU EAT WELL.
THEY'RE BRINGING FOOD FOR YOU EVERY DAY I'VE TURNED THEM AWAY AS YOU REQUESTED, YET .CONSIDER THEIR FEELINGS
THE FEELINGS I CAN ACCEPT, AND WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE.

HOW HOW ARE WE TO MAKE AMENDS?
TO YOU, SENSEI! AND TO YOUR POOR WIFE AND SON..
MEISHU-DONO- IT'S OVER NOW, PLEASE.. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
BUT ISN'T THERE ANY-THING? SOME SMALL THING THAT WOULD LIFT YOUR SPIRITS. ?
WELL, IF YOU INSIST, PERHAPS.. SOME SWEET CAKES..?
?!? SWEET CAKES...? THOSE LITTLE CANDIED CAKES...?
HM. YES.



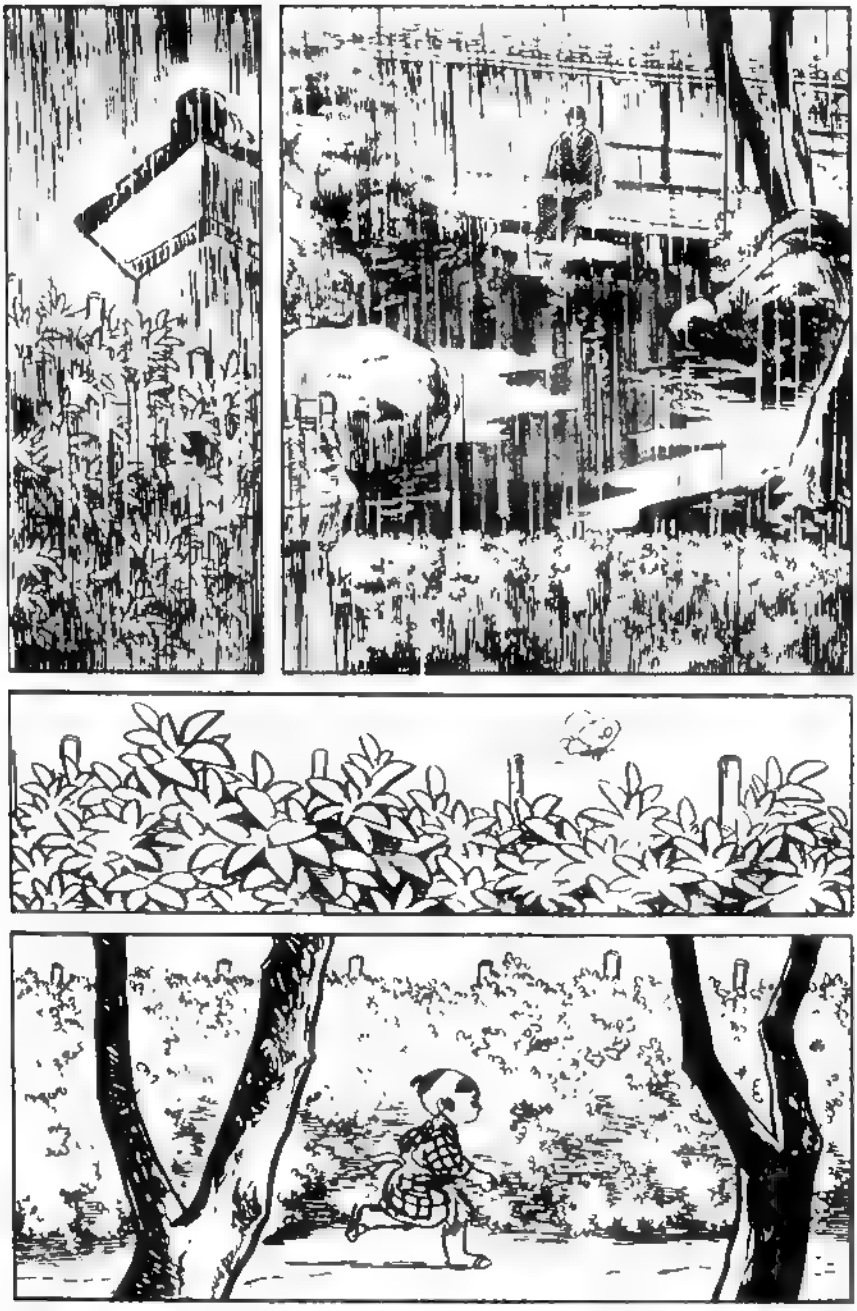
SO. YOU DON'T COME WHEN IT RAINS. .?

THIS IS FOR THE SENSEI
MEISHI-SAMA! PLEASE GIVE THIS TO THE SENSEI!
WE BEG YOU, MEISHI-SAMA! AS A SIGN OF OUR THANKS
PLEASE, ALL OF YOU! I UNDERSTAND WELL.
HOW IS THE SENSEI DOING?

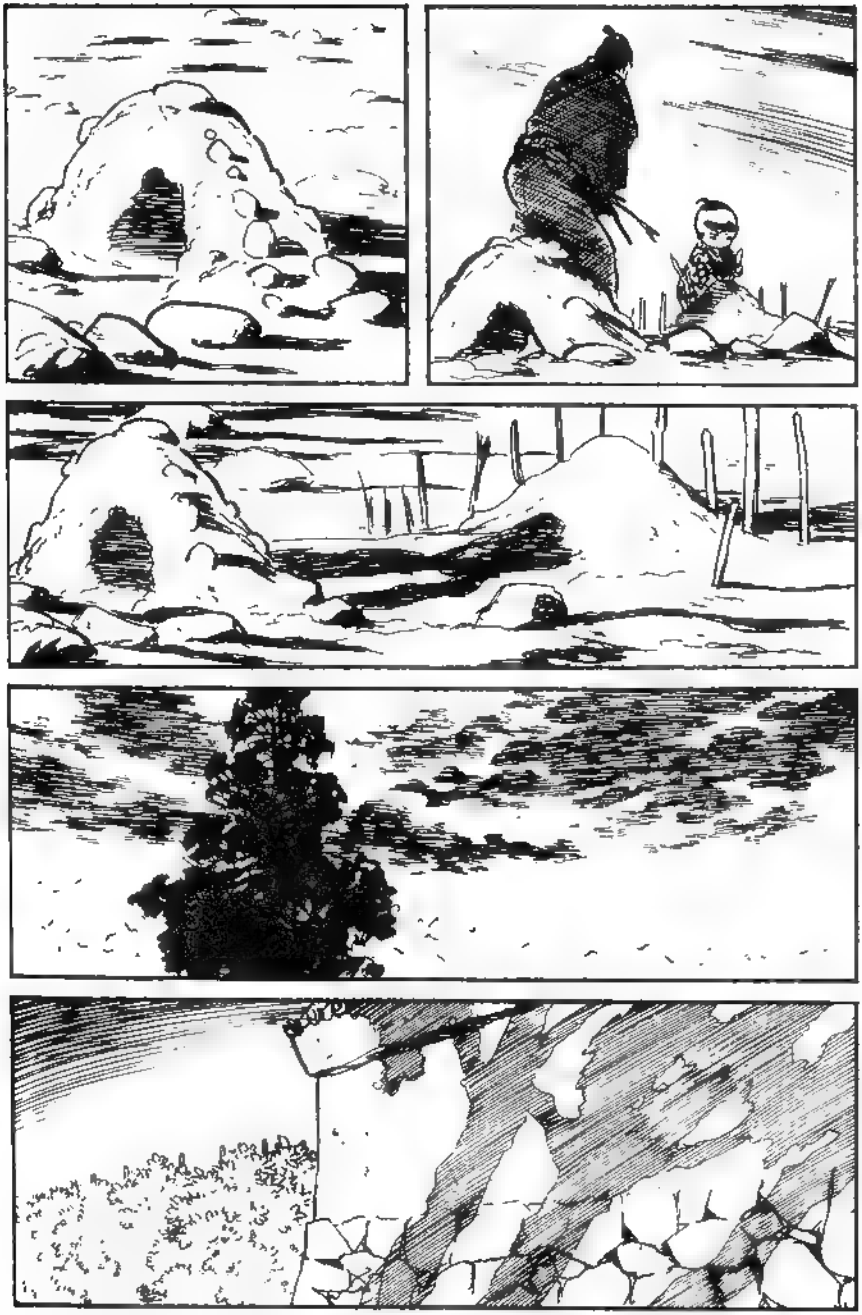

THE SENSEI SAYS HE ACCEPTS YOUR FEELINGS WITH GRATITUDE.
BUT HE ASKS THAT RATHER THAN FEEDING A MAN ABOUT TO DIE, YOU SHARE THESE OFFERINGS AMONG THE HUNGRY
I'M SORRY I'VE PLEADED WITH HIM, BUT HE WON'T BUDGE
SENSEI-SAMA...

AUGGH!

HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

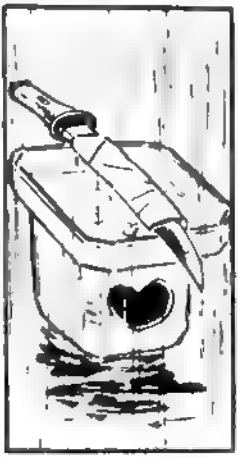


SPLSSH



WE HAVE COMPLETED OUR INVESTIGATIONS.
AND NOW, THOUGH IT PAINS ME DEEPLY, I MUST CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE DAY FOR YOUR SEPPUKU
I HAVE ONE REQUEST
SPEAK FREELY
I WOULD LIKE IT TO BE A RAINY DAY
A RAINY DAY ?
PLEASE DO NOT ASK WHY
IN THAT CASE., ON THE NEXT RAINY DAY
THANK YOU, SIR.

PUWEEE!!
FUWEEE!
FUWEEE!
FUWEEE!
FUWEEE!
FUWEEE!
FUWEEE!

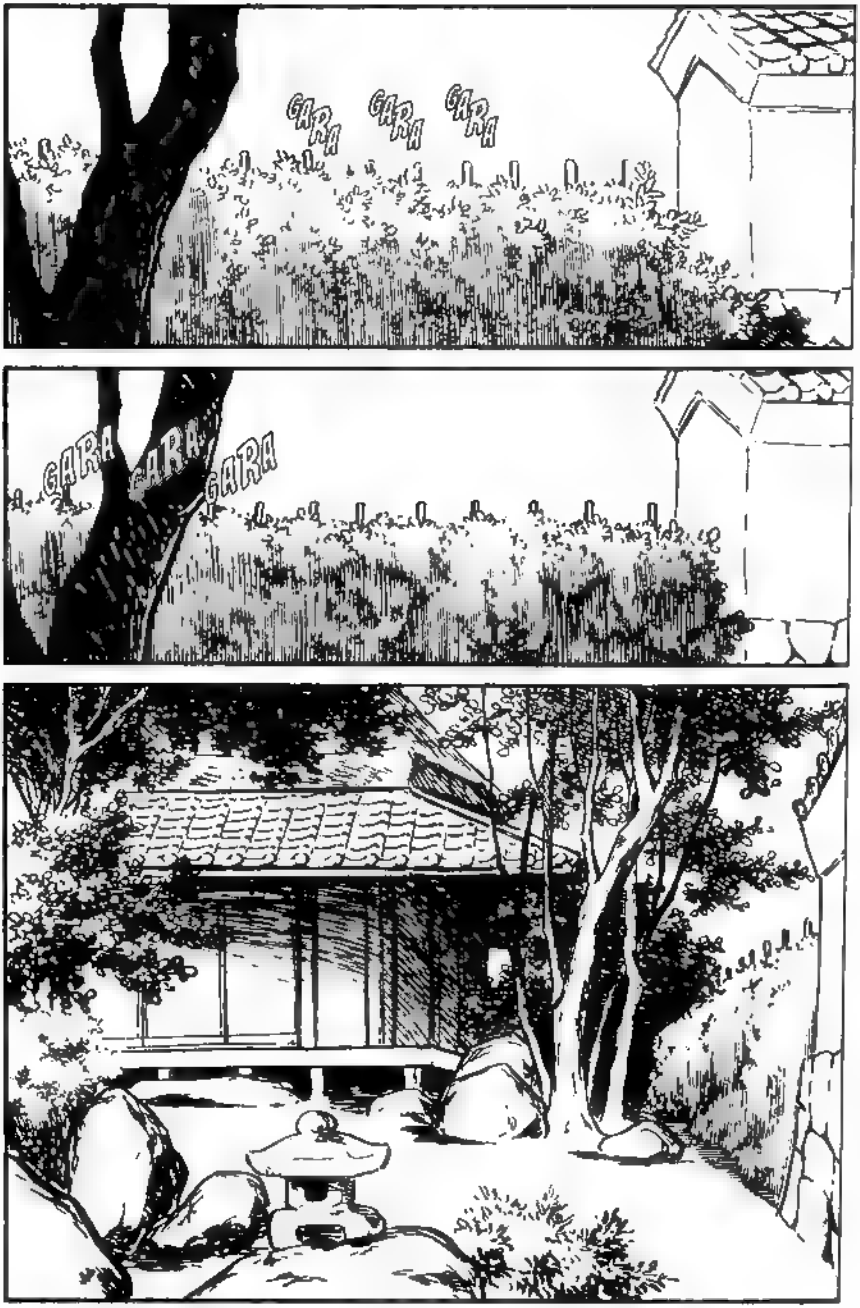


PLEASE. DO NOT COME.
EXCUSE ME SENSEI-SAMA .?
IT WAS NOTHING.

FAREWELL...
SLCCH

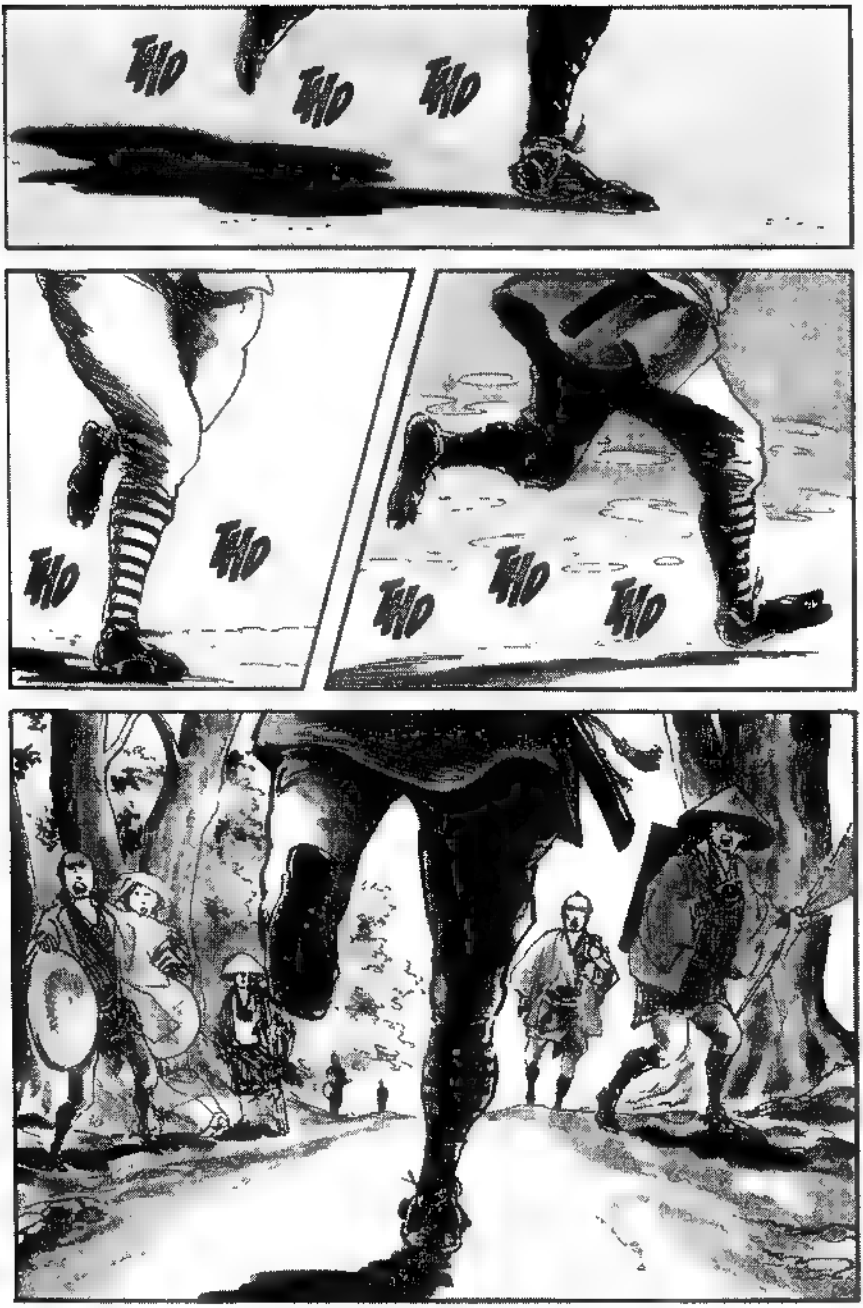
WHOOK

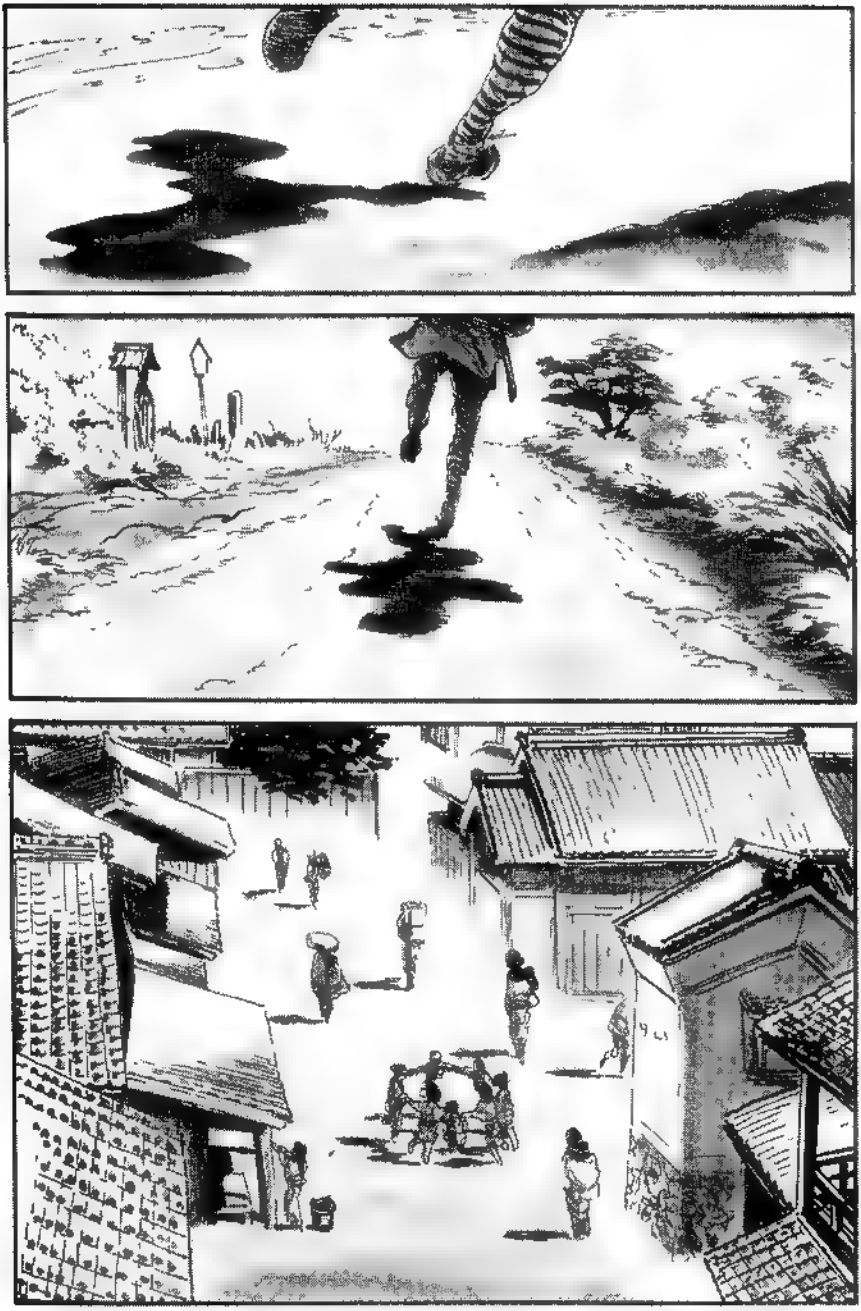
COME ON, DAIGORO.
GARA
GARA
GARA


GARA GARA GARA
GARA GARA GARA

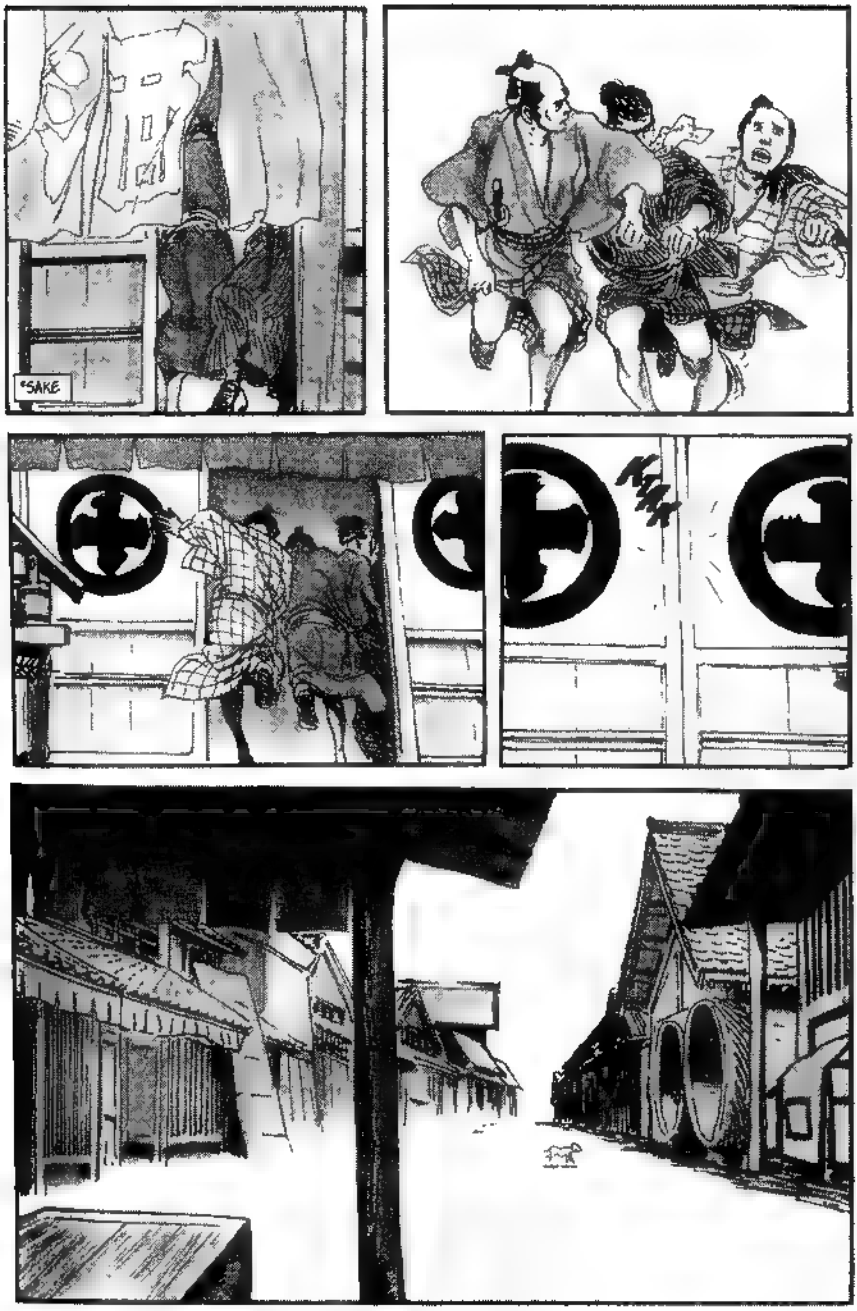
the seventieth

O-Shichisi Man


THD
THD
THD
THD
THD
THD
THD
THD



HEY!!
IT'S THE O-SHICHIRI!!
THE O-SHICHIRI'S COMIN'!!!
THE O-SHICHIRI-SAN'S COMING!
HURRY!
GET INSIDE!
THE O-SHICHIRI'S COMING!!


°SAKE

THD
THD

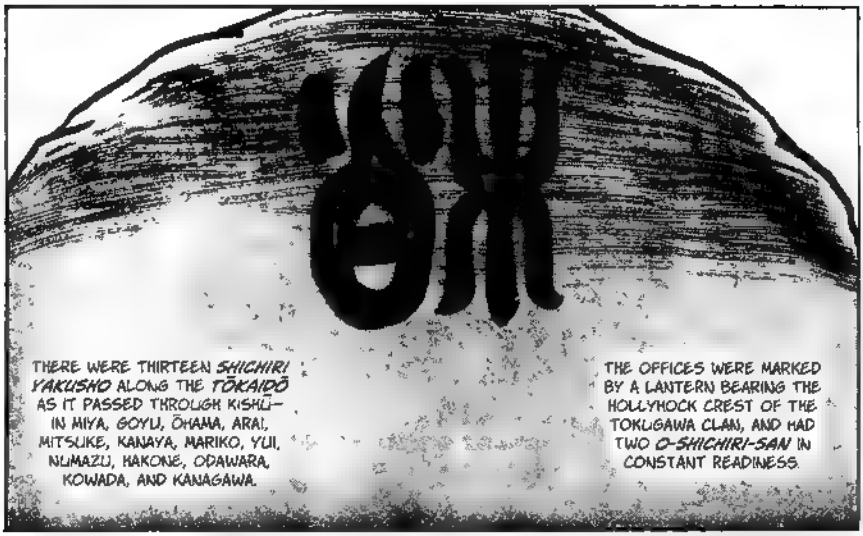
WHOO
DAMN YOU!!
L-LOOK AT THIS!
IT'S HIS. YOUR SON'S INAI!

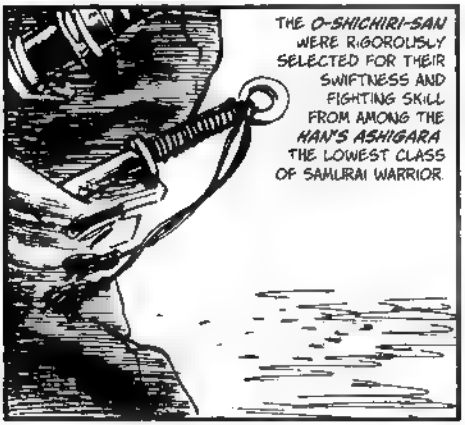
KRAK
OW!
NO!! I'M NOT LETTING GO!

K-HE DIED RIGHT AFTER HE WAS BORN! YOUR OWN POOR CHILD! NO NAME, NO KAIMYŌ!
AT LEAST. AT THE VERY LEAST— NAME HIM! HE'S YOUR SON!!
SWK
DAMN YOU! YOU HEARTLESS MONSTER! YOU DEMON!!

THE *O-SHICHIRI* WERE SPECIAL RUNNERS WHO DELIVERED LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE LORD OF A *HAN*. A FRESH RUNNER WOULD TAKE THE LETTER BOX EVERY *SHICHIRI*, OR SEVEN *RI*, APPROXIMATELY SEVENTEEN MILES. THESE WERE LETTERS OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY, DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS FROM A *DAIMYO* TO THE *SHOGUN* HIMSELF.

THE *SHICHIRI* RUNNERS OF KISHŪ WERE THE MOST FAMOUS OF ALL. *SHICHIRI YAKUSHO* OFFICES MANNED WITH RUNNERS WERE MAINTAINED EVERY SEVEN *RI* ALONG THE *TŌKAIDŌ*, THE MAIN ROUTE FROM EDO TO OSAKA. THE RUNNERS THEMSELVES ENJOYED HAVING THE HONORIFIC TITLE *O-SHICHIRI-SAN*.

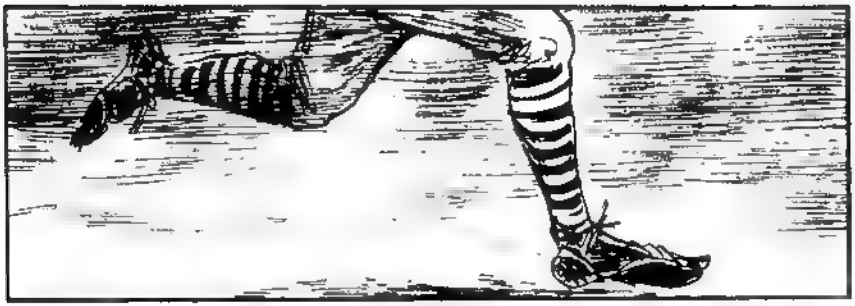

THERE WERE THIRTEEN *SHICHIRI YAKUSHO* ALONG THE *TŌKAIDŌ* AS IT PASSED THROUGH KISHŪ— IN MIYA, GOYU, ŌHAMA, ARAI, MITSUKE, KANAYA, MARIKO, YUI, NUMAZU, HAKONE, ODAWARA, KOWADA, AND KANAGAWA.
THE OFFICES WERE MARKED BY A LANTERN BEARING THE HOLLYHOCK CREST OF THE TOKUGAWA CLAN, AND HAD TWO *O-SHICHIRI-SAN* IN CONSTANT READINESS.


THE *O-SHICHIRI-SAN* WERE RIGOROUSLY SELECTED FOR THEIR SWIFTNESS AND FIGHTING SKILL FROM AMONG THE *HAN'S ASHIGARA* THE LOWEST CLASS OF SAMURAI WARRIOR.

THEY WERE GIVEN AN ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION OF RICE AND A TWO-HUNDRED *MONME* BONUS OVER AND ABOVE THE REGULAR *ASHIGARA* STIPEND

MOREOVER, DESPITE THEIR LOW STATUS, THE RUNNERS WERE GRANTED A LIMITED RIGHT OF *KIRISUTE GOMEN*, THE SAMURAI PREROGATIVE TO KILL WITHOUT QUESTION. AN *O-SHICHIRI-SAN* COULD TAKE UP TO THREE LIVES TO GET THE MAIL THROUGH. EVEN THE POLICE OF THE EIGHT STATES OF THE *KANTŌ* REGION WOULD CLEAR THE ROAD TO LET THEM PASS.

AFTER ALL, THE O-SHICHIRI-SAN OF KISHŪ CARRIED THE CREST OF THE SHŌGUN HIMSELF ON THEIR SHOULDERS.
INEVITABLY, SOME O-SHICHIRI-SAN ABUSED THEIR PRIVILEGE.
AT TIME. WORD THAT AN O-SHICHIRI-SAN WAS COMING COULD CAUSE PANIC *TO AVOID THE CURSE, DON'T TOUCH THE IDOL* SO THE SAYING GOES AND INDEED, PEOPLE WAITED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS FOR THE RUNNERS TO PASS
THIS IS ONE O-SHICHIRI-SAN OF K.SHŪ— TOBI JINZA.



SHIT!! YOUR WIFE'S TRYING TO HANG HERSELF AND YOU DON'T EVEN LOOK?!
YOU MONSTER! YOU DEMON!

IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT IT, I'LL KILL YOU NEXT TIME!
I'LL KILL YOU DEAD!!

D-DIE!!
SWING
AHH!
D-DAMN IT ALL..!
RRG. !!

SURPE
SHICE
AW, HELL! AIN'T THERE ANYONE HERE THAT'LL KILL TOBI JINZA THE O-SHICHIRI?!
SHICE
HOW 'BOUT YOU, TOSHU?! YOU'LL DO JINZA, WON'CHA? PRETTY PLEASE?
D-DON'T EVEN JOKE ABOUT IT!
I'D DO ANYTHING FOR YA, O-TOSH, BUT KILL AN O-SHICHIRI? YOU'RE OUTTA YOUR MIND!
I DIDN' SAY FER FREE!
SHICE
DO IT AN' I'LL GIVE YA THIS!

THIS BODY'S STILL GOOD FOR SOMETHIN', DAMN IT! DON'T ONE A' YOU GUYS WANT IT?!

Y'CAN HAVE ALL OF IT! DO WHATEVER Y' WANT WITH IT!
HAVE YOUR DAMN FUN 'TIL YER SICK OF ME, THEN SELL ME TO A BROTHEL, WHATEVER THE HELL Y' FEEL LIKE!
SHIT, I'LL BRING TWENTY RYŌ AT LEAST!
C'MON! AIN'T THERE ANYONE HERE?
ANYONE WHO'LL KILL TOBI JINZA FOR THIS

KIAK
SHAAAK
WE'D LIKE SOME FOOD

WELL, FUCK! WIMPS 'N COWARDS, THE WHOLE LOT OF 'EM...
SO SCARED 'A THAT O-SHICHIRI, THEY'RE SHITTIN' THEIR PANTS...
SLURP
FUCK IT I'M NOT GIVIN' UP!
GONNA KILL THAT BASTARD. ABANDONIN' HIS OWN WIFE 'N KID...
SHICE

SHAAK
WHO IS THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE?
WE'RE *RENTING* THIS PLACE.
CHNG

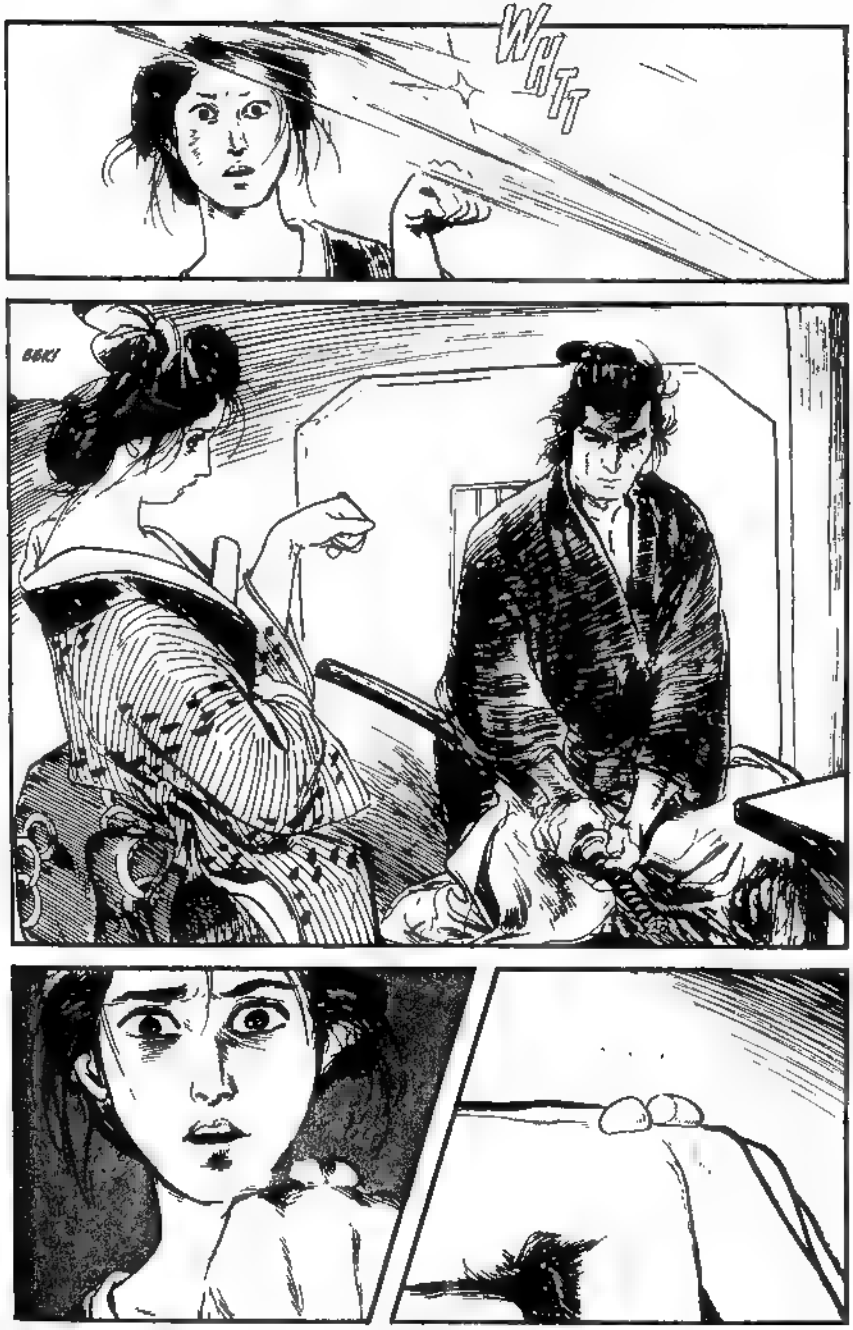
Y-YASSIR BUT THE OTHER GUESTS ARE--
MAKE THEM LEAVE.
WE'LL PAY THEIR BILLS. IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH?
K-KEH, HEH. THAT'S RIGHT CHARI-TABLE!
LEAVIN' NOW! MAKIN' TRACKS!

YOU LEAVE, TOO.
WE'VE PAID FOR YOUR MEAL.
A FALLEN SAMURAI LIKE YOU SHOULD BE *GLAD* FOR A FREE MEAL.
YOU DON'T NEED TO *THANK* US. JUST GET *OUT.*
NO
WHAT?!
WHY YOU—! ACTING *TOUGH,* EH, YOU STARVING *RŌNIN?!*
YOU'LL *REGRET* THIS!

WE'RE HAVING OUR MEAL. PLEASE DON'T DISTURB US.
DAMN YOU!
SHAAAA
AH?!

YOU DEFY THE MEN OF THE KISHU INFANTRY?!
ONE WHO IMPOSES HIS WILL WITHOUT AAAAA NOR REASON IS NOT A MAN.
AND WHEN ATTACKED BY AN ANIMAL, YOU DEFEND YOURSELF
BASTARD! YOU'RE CALLING US ANIMALS?!
THEN SEE IF YOU CAN BREAK THESE FANGS!
?!

PLACE THIS GRAIN OF RICE ON YOUR FIST
WHAT?!?
AN ANIMAL DOESN'T UNDERSTAND REASON.
INSTEAD, I'LL DEMONSTRATE MY SKILL.
BARE YOUR FANGS AFTER YOU'VE SEEN YOUR ENEMY'S STRENGTH.
SHIT, I'LL DO IT
JUS' MAKE A FIST, AND PUT THE RICE ON IT.. RIGHT?


WHIT
BEK!

WITH-DRAW!
W.. WE'VE NO TIME TO WASTE HERE.

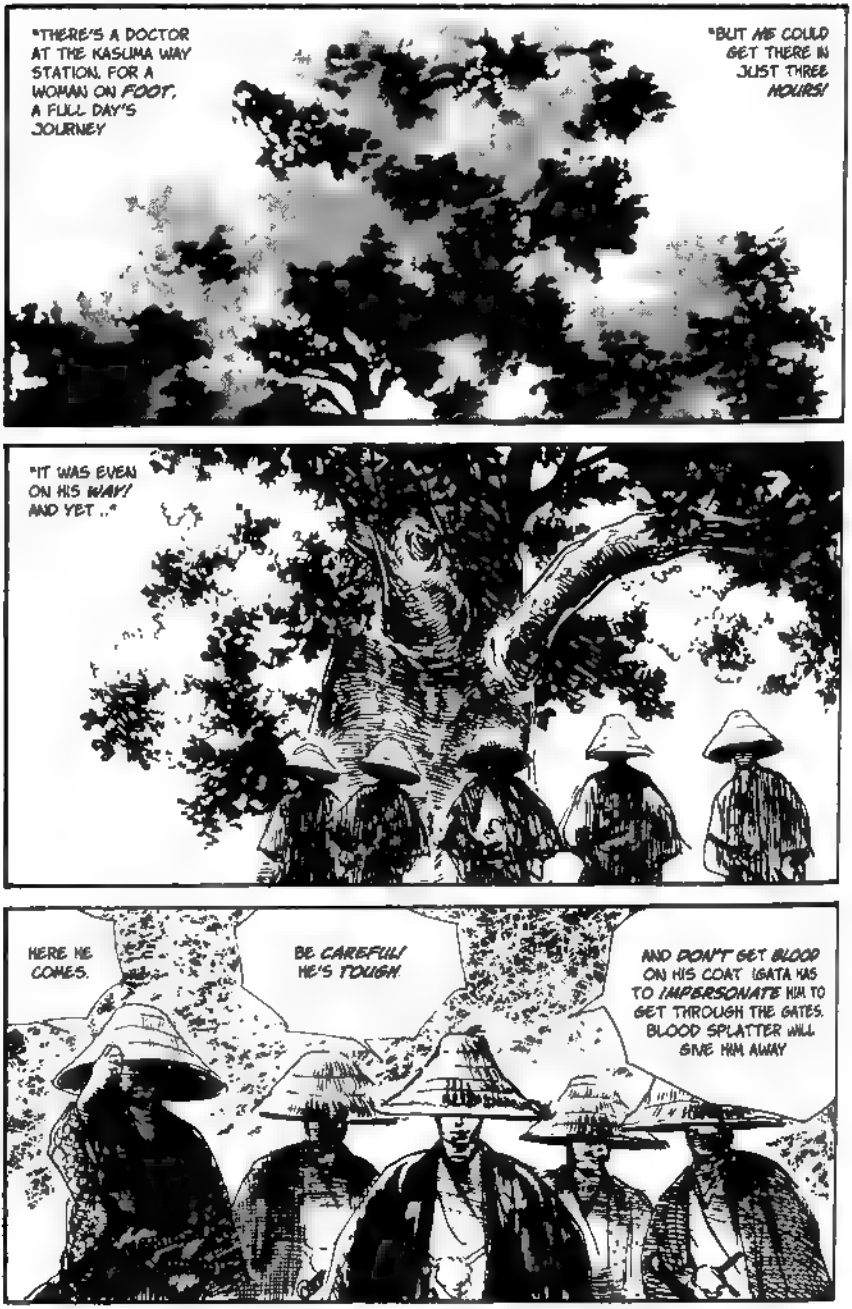
THANK YOU.

LITTLE BOY, HOW OLD ARE YOU?
REALLY... THREE.
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
N-NOTHING ONLY, IF HE'D LIVED
I'D HAVE A LITTLE CHILD, TOO.
PLEASE, SIR! I WANT REVENGE FOR MY POOR DEAD CHILD!
HELP ME! GIVE ME THE USE OF YOUR SWORD ARM!
THIS IS MY SON'S IHAI HE DIED OF ILLNESS RIGHT AFTER HE WAS BORN

AS YOU CAN SEE HE HAS NO NAME, NOT KAIMYŌ NOR ZOKUMYŌ I WANT TO FREE HIM TO GO TO PARADISE!
PLEASE! KILL THE MAN WHO MURDERED MY CHILD! HIS NAME IS TOBI JINZA, THE KISHŪ O-SHICHIRI.
I BEG YOU, KIND SIR I'LL DO ANYTHING FOR YOU, ANYTHING AT ALL!
IF YOU NEED MONEY, YOU CAN SELL ME TO A BROTHEL!
....
TELL ME ALL
Y-YES, SIR.
THE O-SHICHIRI TOBI JINZA I ASK YOU TO KILL, HE.. HE'S MY SON'S FATHER
WHAT ?

I'M TOBI'S WIFE, O-TOSHI!
I SAY "WIFE," BUT HE DIVORCED ME WHEN OUR CHILD DIED NOW I'M REDUCED TO THIS- A MISERABLE SERVING WENCH!
THAT MAN, TOBI JINZA, IS DEDICATED TO HIS JOB.
"OBSESSED WITH IT AND THAT'S WHY
" WHEN OUR SON WAS BORN, HE WAS AWAY ON MAN BUSINESS.
"SINCE JUST BEFORE I GAVE BIRTH, HIS WORKLOAD HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY

"THERE IS SOME KIND OF DISPUTE IN THE HAN. .
" AND MORE AND MORE LETTERS TO DELIVER.
"THREE DAYS AFTER HE WAS BORN, OUR SON FELL ILL. IT WASN'T SERIOUS— WITH PROPER CARE, HE COULD HAVE LIVED!
"I WENT TO THE HIGHWAY WHERE MY HUSBAND RUNS. .
" AND ASKED HIM TO SEND A DOCTOR.


"THERE'S A DOCTOR AT THE KASUMA WAY STATION, FOR A WOMAN ON *FOOT*, A FULL DAY'S JOURNEY
"BUT *WE* COULD GET THERE IN JUST THREE *HOURS!*
"IT WAS EVEN ON HIS *WAY!* AND YET .."
HERE HE COMES.
BE *CAREFUL!* HE'S *TOUGH.*
AND *DON'T* GET *BLOOD* ON HIS COAT. IGATA HAS TO *IMPERSONATE* HIM TO GET THROUGH THE GATES. BLOOD SPLATTER WILL GIVE HIM AWAY

ONE CLEAN THRUST, UNDERSTAND? AND DON'T PULL IT OUT WHEN HE'S DOWN.
IT'S TOO BAD FOR HIM, BUT WE HAVE TO IMPERSONATE AN O-SHICHIRI TO GET CLOSE TO THE SCUM WHO ARE CONTROLLING OUR LORD

"...AND YET HE WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING!

"AND WHEN HE RETURNED SEVEN DAYS LATER. .
"...OUR SON HAD BEEN DEAD THREE DAYS.

SHANNG
"I CURSED HIM, THEN. I CALLED HIM EVERY FOUL THING IMAGINABLE."
SKU
GYAA!
"I TOLD HIM HE'D MURDERED OUR CHILD! KILLED BY HIS OWN FATHER!"

GCHOK
URNG!
'AND, AND IT'S TRUE, ISN'T IT?

"I MEAN, OF COURSE HE HAD HIS DUTIES, LOTS OF THEM. EVEN I UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH.

"THAT'S WHY I'D ALWAYS WAITED, ALWAYS ENDURED, ALL THOSE LONG DAYS AND WEEKS WHEN HE DIDN'T COME HOME.
"THAT WAS OUR LIFE.

"BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT!
"HIS ONLY SON, HIS OWN FLESH AND BLOOD, WAS DYING!

SPLCCH
"SOMEONE ON DUTY, EVEN A TOTAL *STRANGER*, EVEN A *DAIMYŌ HIMSELF* WOULD STOP TO SAVE A CHILD'S LIFE.
"I MEAN, THERE'S *NOTHING* MORE IMPORTANT THAN A *HUMAN LIFE*, RIGHT?
"AND THIS WAS HIS *OWN SON!*"

SKSSH

DAMN!
AFTER HIM!!

*HE SAID ONLY ONE THING TO ME--TO GET OUT, TO NEVER COME BACK.

"ALMOST . ALMOST AS IF I HAD KILLED OUR CHILD!
"AND ONE MORE THING, HE SAID. YOU TAKE THE BODY
"I BEGGED HIM. . AT LEAST GIVE OUR SON A NAME!
"AND THAT'S HOW IT BEGAN OUR BATTLE. ME AND HIM, AS HE RUNS THE HIGHWAY."

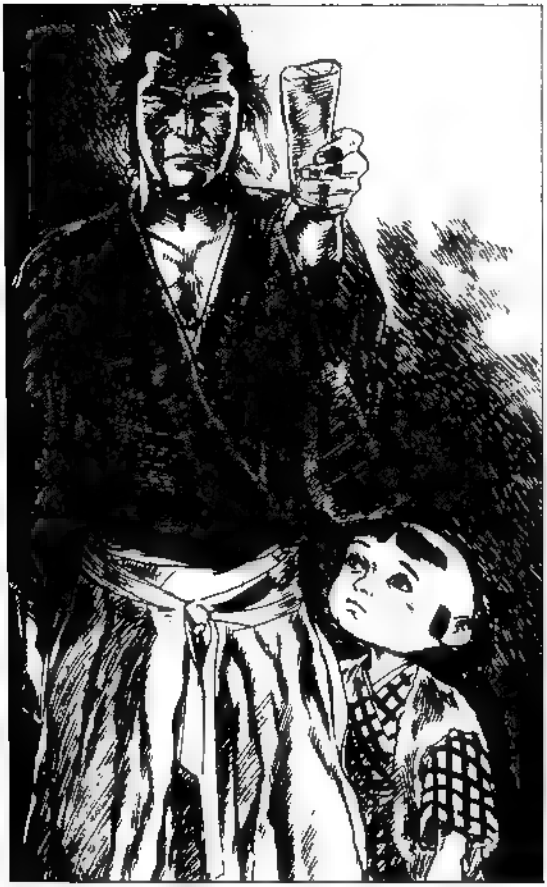
I SWEAR THAT MAN'S A DEMON! I. I..

SKASH
HUKK

HUSBAND?!
GET...GET THIS TO THE SHICHIRI YAKUSHO! WITHOUT FAIL!
NOW... G-GIVE ME...
...OUR BOY'S. IHA!
....
....

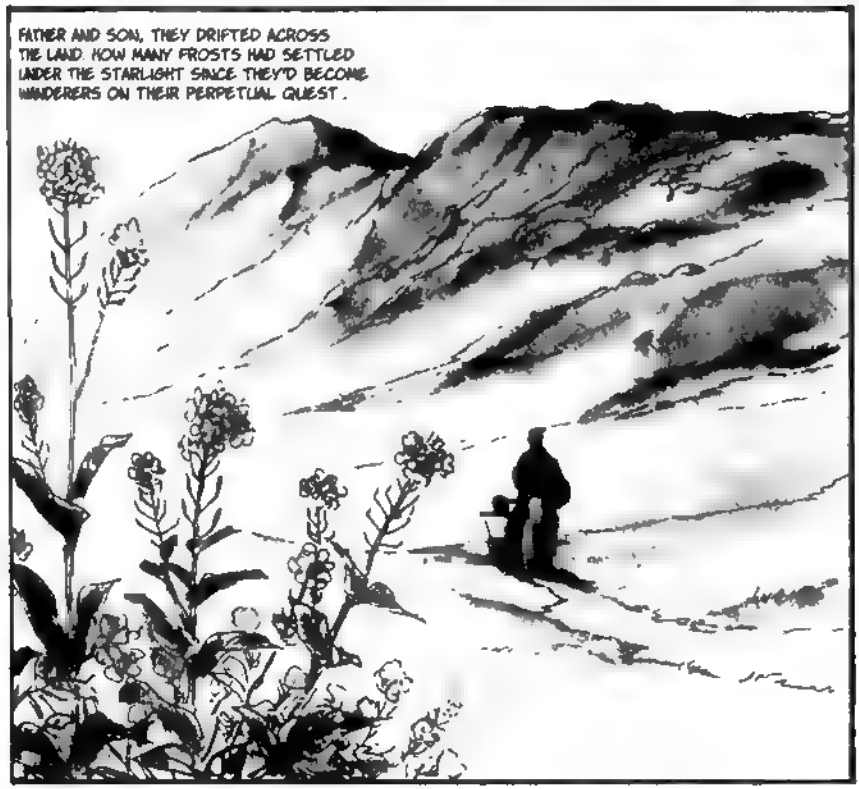
*JIN'KICHI
*JINZA

FOR THIS MAN, THE HIGHWAY WAS A BATTLEFIELD
A SLAUGHTERHOUSE WHERE HE STAKED HIS LIFE.
H-HUSBAND ?!
HE COULDN'T STOP TO HELP HIS WIFE, NOT EVEN TO SAVE HIS OWN DYING CHILD.
HE WAS JUST AN ASHIGARA, BUT HIS HEART WAS THE HEART OF BUSHIDŌ, SERVING HIS LORD WITH LIFE IN DEATH.
HOW HE MUST HAVE SUFFERED.
AKHH!!
MY DARLING...!

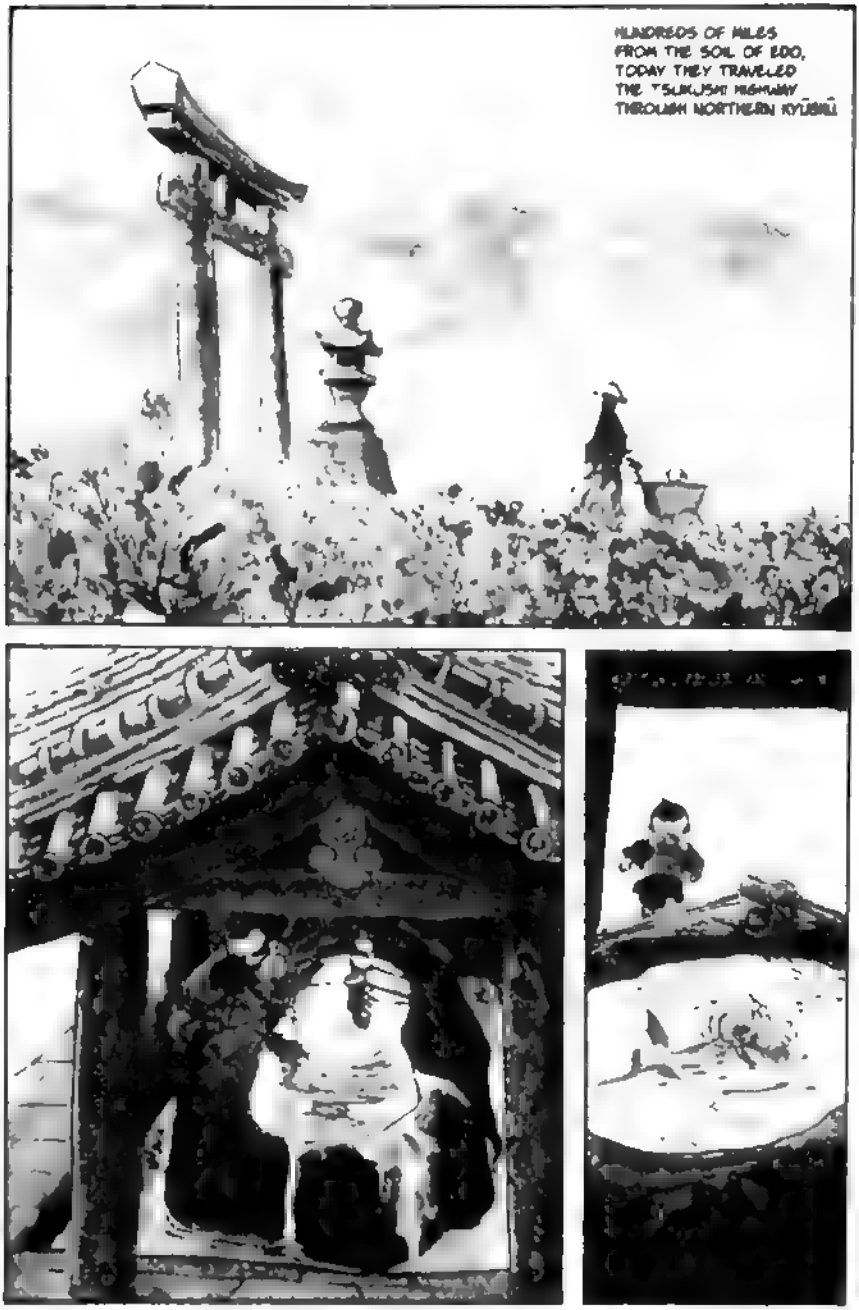


the seventy-first

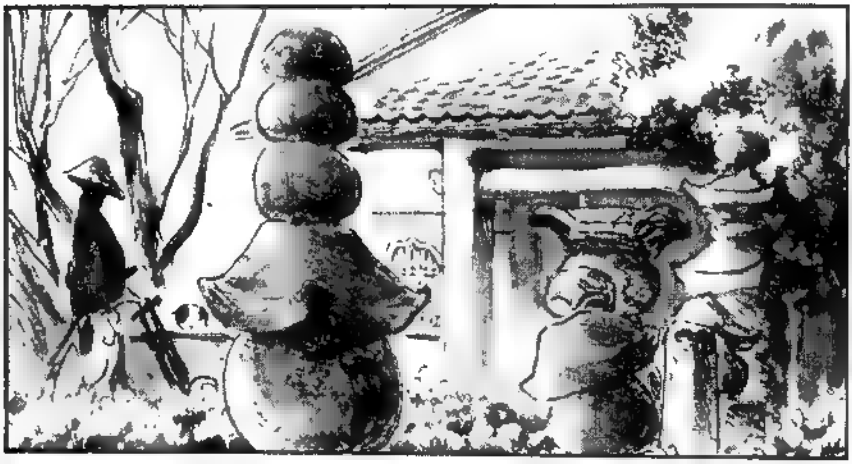
The Kyūshū Road

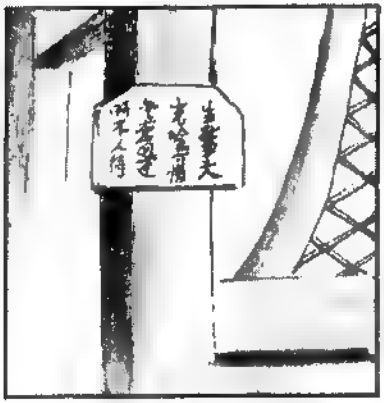

FATHER AND SON, THEY DRIFTED ACROSS THE LAND. HOW MANY FROSTS HAD SETTLED UNDER THE STARLIGHT SINCE THEY'D BECOME WANDERERS ON THEIR PERPETUAL QUEST.

Bzzz

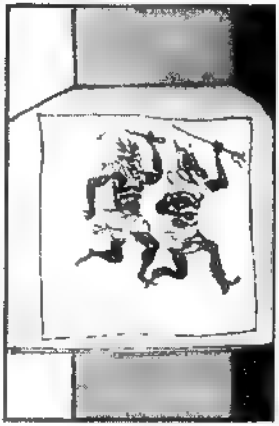

HUNDREDS OF MILES
FROM THE SOIL OF EDO,
TODAY THEY TRAVELED
THE "SUKUJUKI HIGHWAY"
THROUGH NORTHERN KYUSHU

KANNON TEMPLE
不許葷酒
肉入境內





生死事大
光陰可惜
無常迅速
時不人待

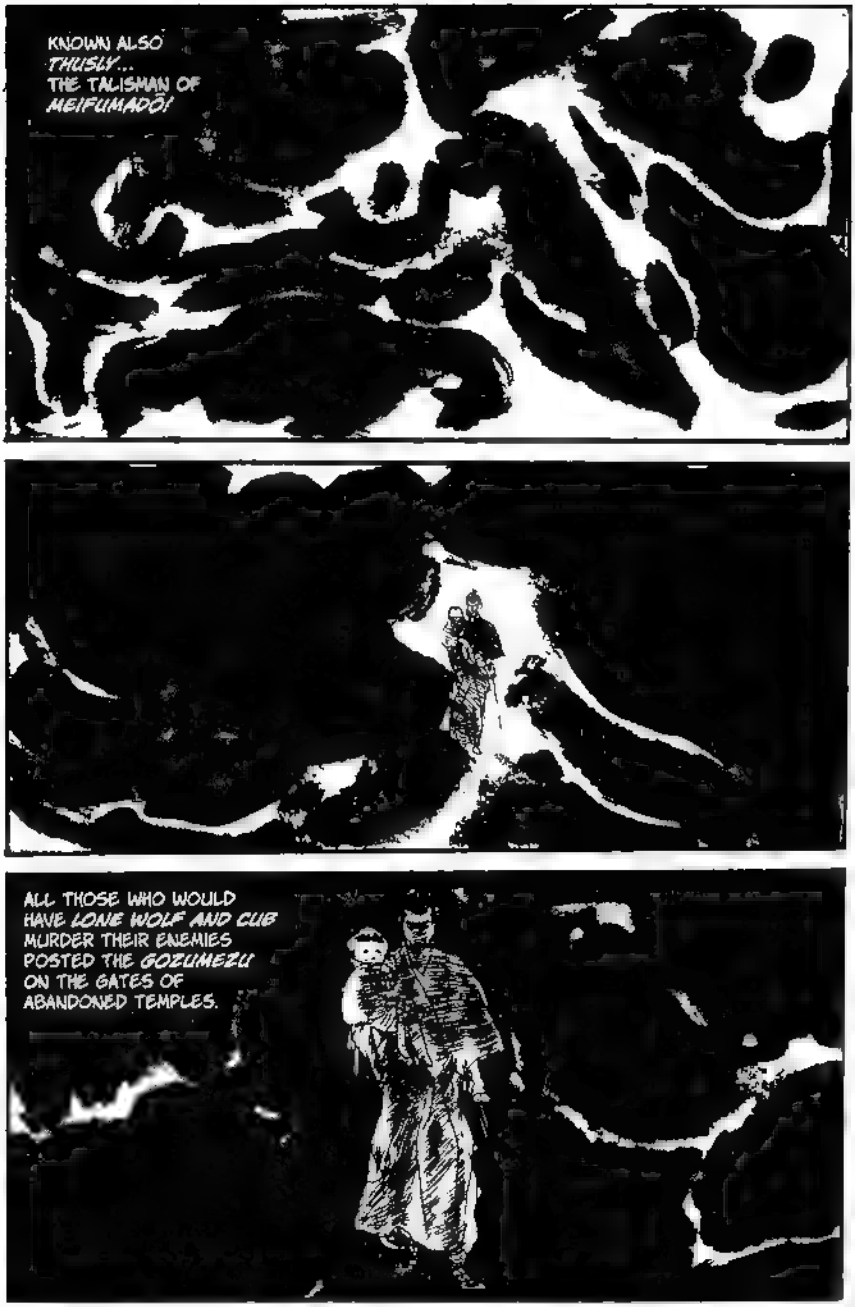


THE OX HEADED DEMON CALL HIM GOZU

THE HORSE HEADED DEMON CALL HIM MEZU

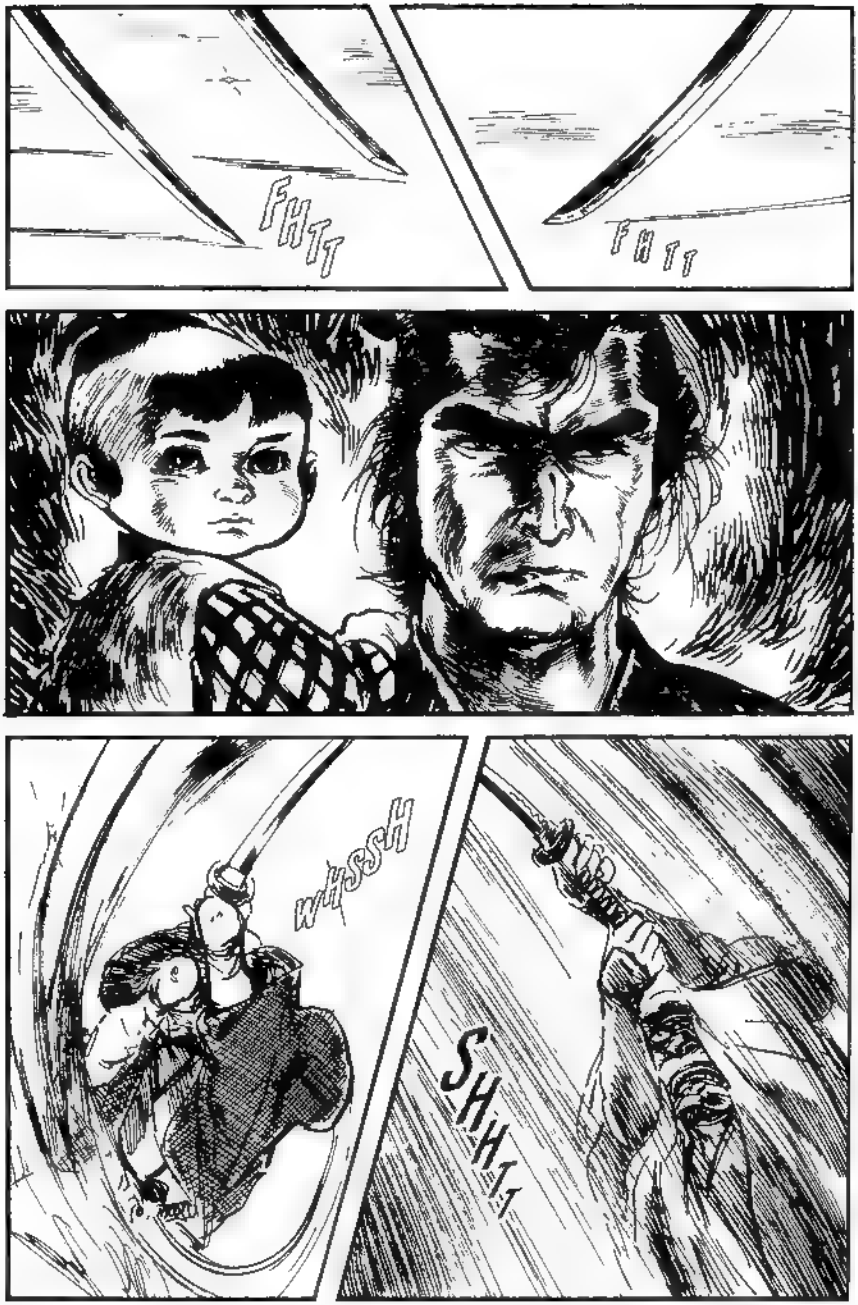
TOGETHER THE GUARDIAN DEMONS OF MEIFUMADO

TALISMAN OF GOZUME! ALL S FORTH THE CURSE & DEATH, THE TALISMAN & DEEPEST ILL FORTUNE THE TALISMAN OF HATRED THE MARK OF THOSE WHO WOULD SEE HUMAN LIFE


KNOWN ALSO THUSLY... THE TALISMAN OF MEIFUMADŌ!
ALL THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE LONE WOLF AND CUB MURDER THEIR ENEMIES POSTED THE GOZUMEZU ON THE GATES OF ABANDONED TEMPLES.

THEY CALLED OUT TO THAT ILL-FATED FATHER AND SON, LIVING AT THE JUNCTION OF *RIKUDŌ SHISHŌ*, THE *SIX PATHS* AND THE *FOUR LIVES*.

BUT WHEN THE ASSASSIN LONE WOLF AND CUB *HIMSELF* PUT UP THE TALISMAN...


FHTT
FHTT
WHSSH
SHHT

GCHOK
TANGG
SHUKK

NGAHH!
NGGK...!
KSHNNG

SKASSH

SHAK
WSSSST
FWIT

KRANG
NGK!
AUGHH!

HRUK!

NEITHER YAGYŪ, NOR KUROKUWA...
MENBOHO FACE GUARDS. GROUND-SKIMMING SWORDS.
A NEW ENEMY SERVING RETSUDŌ?

NGNAHH!!
SHUKKK
GYAHHH!
SKSSSH

WHI
T
T
SKRSSH
HSSH!
SPLIT

MEDICINE BOX. A GIFT FROM HIS LORD. ?
LORD KURODA, OF CHIKUZEN.
THE MASKS. THAT SWORD STANCE.
YES.. IF THEY'RE KURODA NAINSHI IT ALL FITS.
OUTFITTED FOR THE ROAD. . . . .
THEY MUST HAVE JOURNEYED FROM CHIKUZEN.

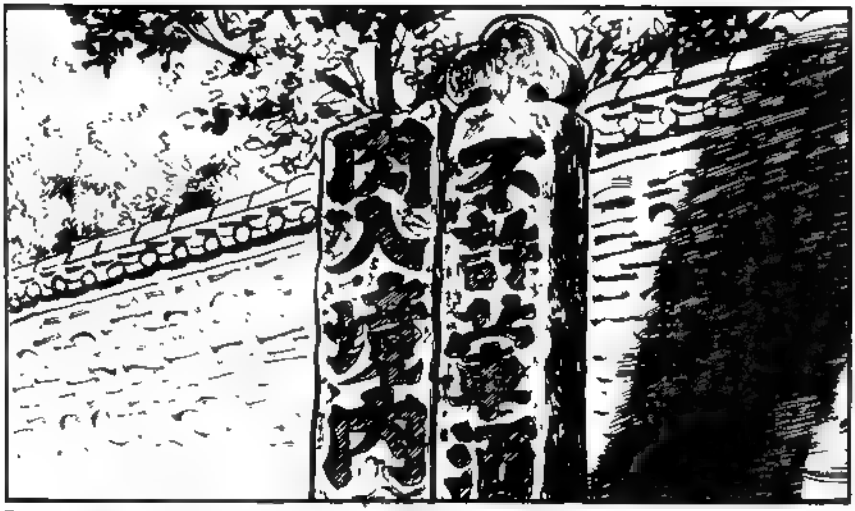
BUT WHY WOULD KURODA HUNT US..?
WHEN THE ASSASSIN LONE WOLF AND CUB HIMSELF PUT UP THE TALISMAN.
IT WAS A CHALLENGE—
—FROM ONE ASSASSIN TO ANOTHER!

FOR A SPEARMAN, TO KURODA GO! SAKUTE SÖZAEMON., PEOPLE WHISPER HIS NAME.
WHY WOULD THE FAMOUS SAKUTE HIDE HIS FACE AND TURN ASSASSIN? WHY DOES KURODA WANT OUR LIVES?

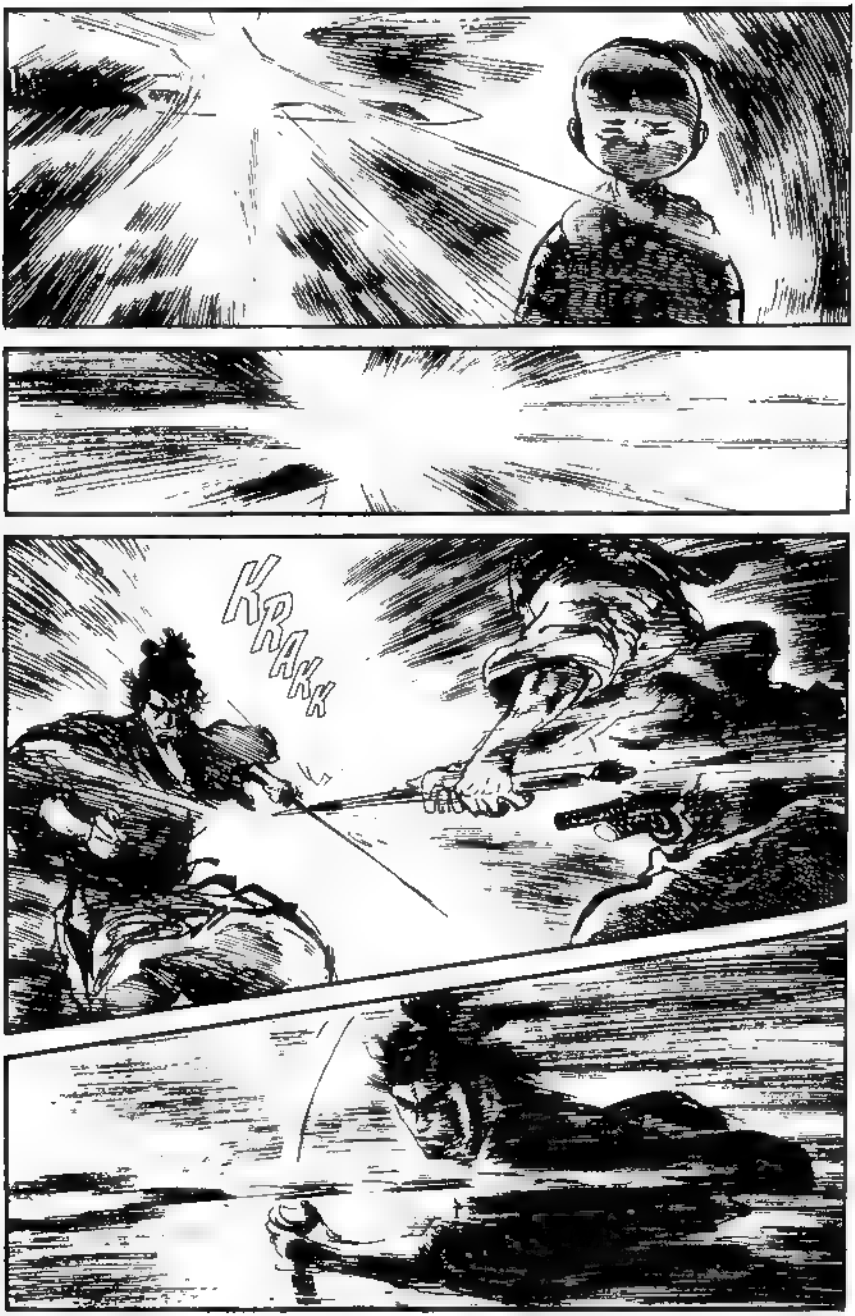
DEFEAT ME, AND ALL WILL BE CLEAR.
FAIL AND IT MATTERS NOT
THIS IS SACRED GROUND
LEAVE THE TEMPLE.
NO.
YOU KNEW WE PURSUED YOU, YET YOU'VE COME STRAIGHT TO CHIKUZEN. SURELY YOU KNEW WHAT AWAITED YOU. ?!
YOU DREAD THIS SPEAR, ŌGAMI ITTŌ?!
FATHER AND SON, WE LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ
"SACRED GROUND" ? ABSURD! WE FIGHT HERE.
BUT .. THE TEMPLE.

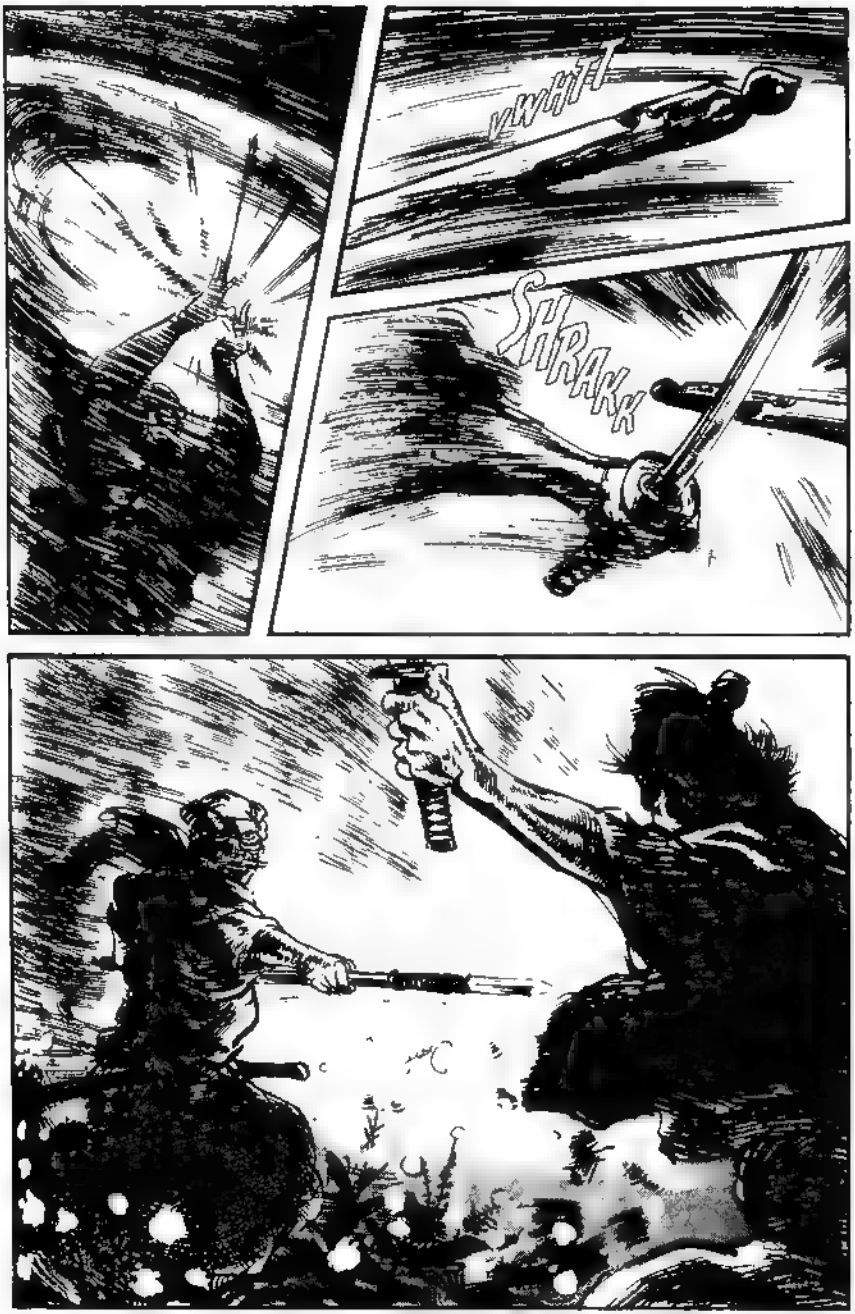
NO ASSASSIN SPEAKS THUS. KILL THE FOE— ANYWHERE. ANYTIME. THAT IS AN ASSASSIN!
THUS HE LIVES IN MEIFUMADŌ, AT THE JUNCTURE OF THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES.
ONLY A BUSHI CHOOSES WHERE TO DIE. IF YOU WOULD LEAVE THE TEMPLE, THEN SPEAK YOUR NAME AND DUEL AS A SAMURAI!
REMOVE YOUR MASK..
AND EXPLAIN WHY WE FIGHT!
WHAT SAY YOU, SAKUTE SŌZAEMON?!
HRN.

YOU SEE THROUGH ME.. I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED NO LESS FROM THE SHŌGUN'S EXECUTIONER
I AM INDEED SAKUTE SŌZAEMON, SPEAR INSTRUCTOR FOR KURODA HAN
YOU WOULD AGREE TO LEAVE THE TEMPLE FOR A FORMAL DUEL?
FIRST YOUR REASON FOR A DUEL.
TO TRY MYSELF AGAINST YOUR SHIIŌ-RYŪ
I ACCEPT


不許葬酒
肉入境內

ALLOW THE MASK. KURODA BUSHIDŌ DEMANDS T
DONE!
HŌZŌIN-RYŪ, SAKUTE SŌZAEMON!
SUIŌ-RYŪ ITTŌ ŌGAMI!


KRAKK


WHIT
SHRAKK

FWIT
FWIT
FWIT
SHNG
KRAKK
KLANNG
WSSSS

WHSSH

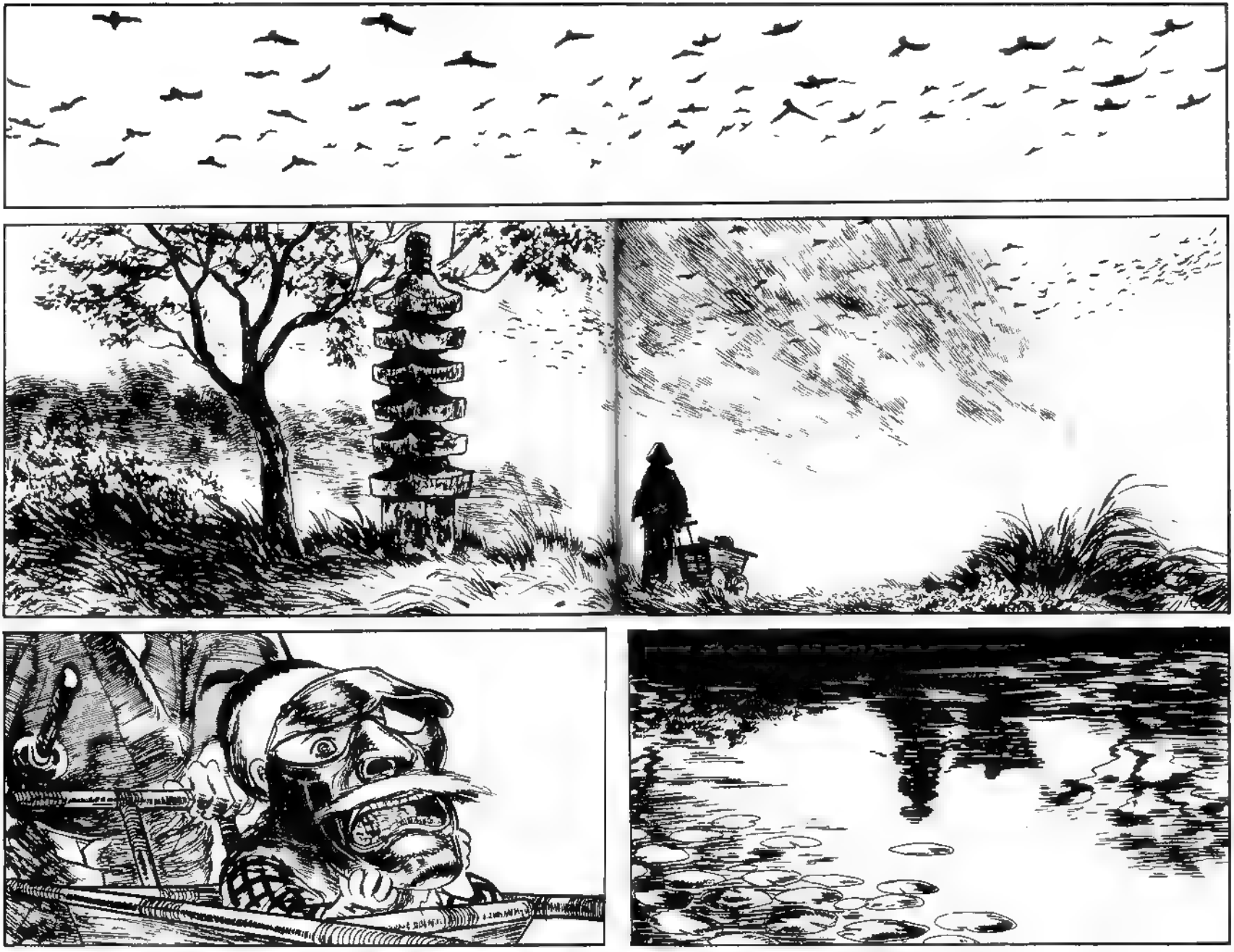
HAH?!

SHHKK
MOMPF
SKASSH

FORGIVE ME, BUT .
.PLEASE REMOVE MY MASK, AND DELIVER THE FINAL STROKE.

MY THANKS.
THE WARRIOR CODE OF THE KURODA CLAN REQUIRES MASKS WHEN WE PERFORM ASSASSINATIONS FOR OUR LORD. WE DEEM IT SHAMEFUL TO SHOW AN UNSEEMLY FACE IN DEATH.
ALIVE, WE FACE PAIN AND DEATH WITH EQUANIMITY. BUT TO PRESERVE THAT FACE ONCE WE'VE BREATHED OUR LAST...
WHY DOES LORD KURODA PURSUE US?
WHY SACRIFICE SUCH PRICELESS HANSHI TO ASSASSINATE US?!
HEAR YOUR ANSWER IN HIS PRESENCE. SAKUTE SŌZAEMON'S GONE. NONE SHALL STOP YOU.
ASK OUR LORD HIMSELF

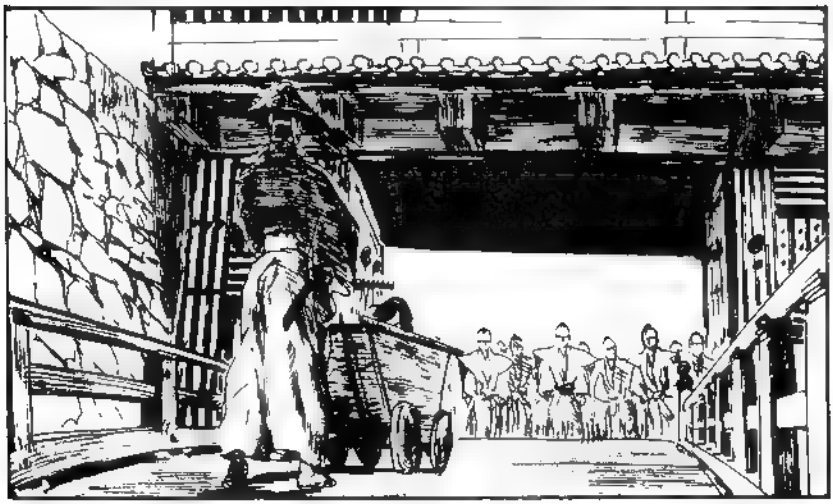
LORD KURODA GRANTS US AUDIENCE?
AYE. .M-HE DOES.
FORGIVE ME!
CHUD



GARA
GARA
GARA
GARA

FUKUOKA CASTLE IN
CHIKUZEN KURODA HAN
(520,000 KOKU).

GARA GARA



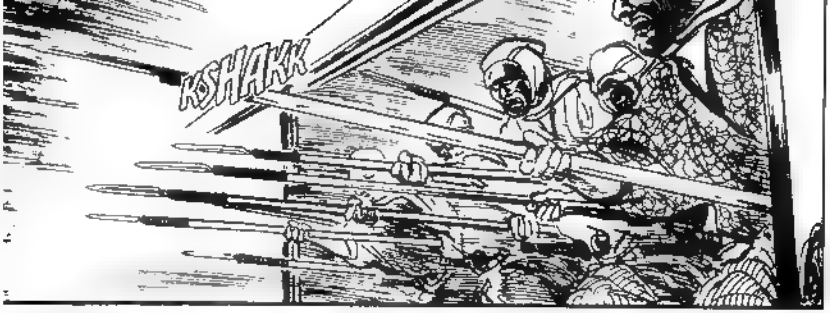
GIRI
GIRI
THE MENBOHO OF SAKUTE SŌZAEMON-DONO.
I WOULD KNOW WHY LORD KURODA SENDS ASSASSINS AGAINST US.
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
PLEASE ENTRUST US WITH YOUR SWORD

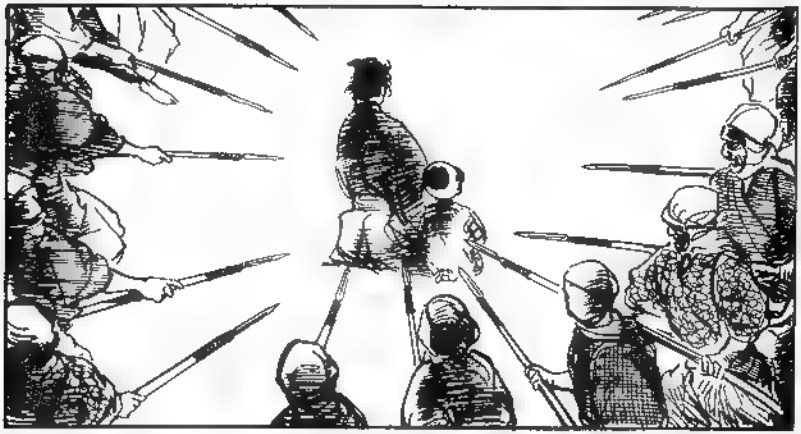
SO SAKUTE, TOO .

NO WONDER THE YAGYŪ FEAR ŌGAMI ITTŌ.
YOUR SWORD, THE GREATEST IN THE LAND
I WOULD ASK LORD KURODA WHY HE SEEKS OUR LIVES.
AND I SHALL TELL YOU.
NEXT YEAR I TRAVEL TO EDO. IT'S THE CHANCE I'VE WAITED FOR, AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A ROJŪ AND GOVERN THE NATION.
AS YOU KNOW, THE RŌJŪ ARE CHOSEN FROM AMONG FUDAI DAIMYŌ WITH HAN OF A HUNDRED-THOUSAND KOKU OR MORE.
YET, WE IN SEIKAIDŌ ARE CONSIDERED SHIZUME-HAN, BOUND TO DEFEND KYŪSHŪ. WE'RE DISQUALIFIED
AND THUS I'M BARRED FROM POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
THEY EXPECT ME TO HOLD ALL OF KYŪSHŪ, YET BAN ME FROM THE INNER CIRCLE?!
FOR THE GOOD OF OUR CLAN, I WILL BE A RŌJŪ I WILL HOLD POWER!
THERE'S ONLY ONE OPTION–
–ALIGN WITH THE YAGYŪ!!

. . . .
. . . .
THE YAGYŪ CAN GET ME A SUITABLE HAN OUTSIDE KYŪSHŪ, AND NOMINATE ME FOR RŌJŪ
RETSUDŌ OF THE URA-YAGYŪ HAS THAT DEGREE OF POWER AND INFLUENCE.
YOU'D KILL US SIMPLY TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE YAGYŪ?!
WHY NOT? I'VE KNOW ABOUT THIS FEUD OF YOURS I SOLVE IT, THEY REWARD ME.
THAT'S WHY I SENT MY ASSASSINS
THEN.
WHY GRANT US AUDI-ENCE?!
IT WAS A PROMISE. TO SAKUTE SŌZAEMON. HE WAS A PILLAR OF THE HAN HE VOLUNTEERED TO KILL YOU, BUT ONLY F I PROMISED TO STOP SENDING ASSASSINS F HE LOST
I'VE KEPT THAT PROMISE.

FOR ALL ALONG, I HAD TWO CHOICES OF GIFT FOR THE YAGYŪ.
FIRST YOUR LIVES
AND SECOND— THE YAGYŪ LETTER!
WELL, ŌGAMI?! WILL YOU SURRENDER IT? DO SO, AND I WILL NOT ONLY SPARE YOU, I'LL TAKE YOU INTO MY SERVICE AT FIVE HUNDRED KOKU A YEAR!
YOU AND YOUR CHILD WILL BE GUARANTEED A LIFE OF SAFETY AND COMFORT! NOW HAND IT OVER! I KNOW YOU HAVE IT!
KNOWING THE YAGYU'S VULNERABILITIES IS EVEN BETTER THAN OFFERING THEM YOUR HEAD
NEVER!
AMAKUSA

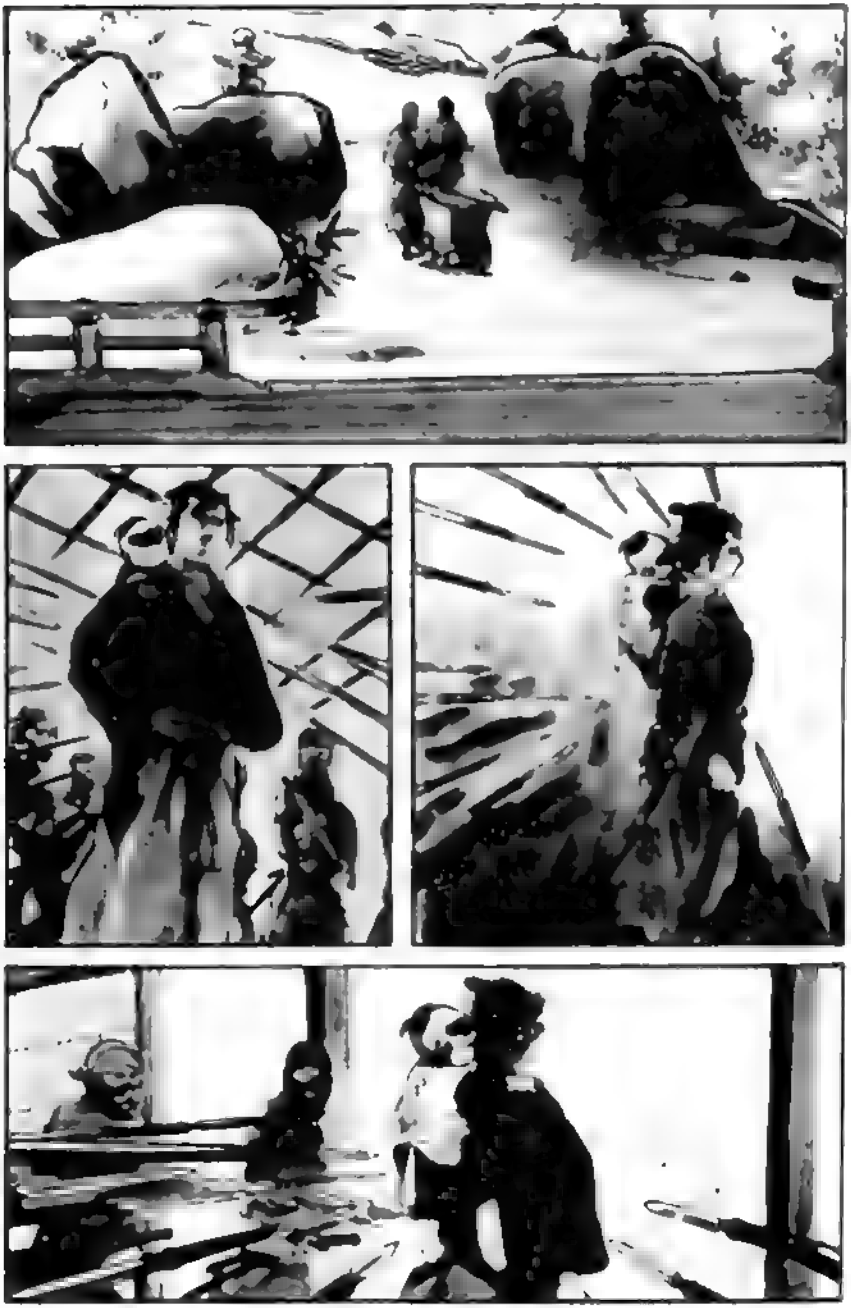

RSHAKK



SPEAK !!
WHERE IS THE LETTER?!

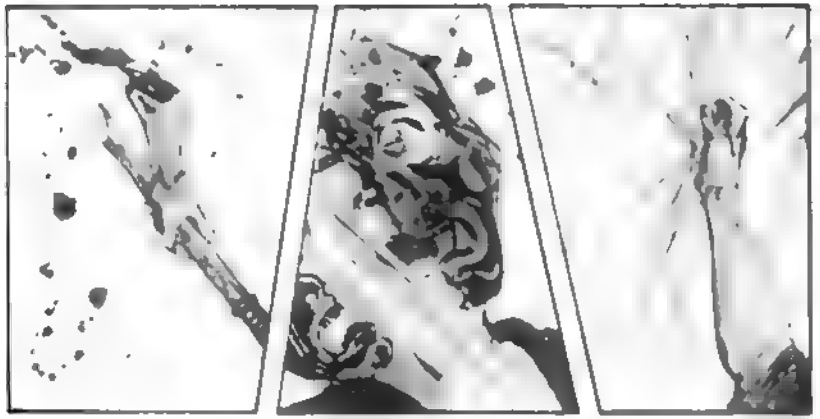
ŌGAM, ITTŌ! WHERE IS THE YAGYŪ LETTER?!

ANSWER ME!
YOU'RE GOOD, BUT YOU'LL NEVER DEFEAT A RING OF SPEARS UNARMED!
NOW— WHERE'S THE LETTER?
HIDDEN IN THE CART I USE TO CARRY MY CHILD
SHOW ME!

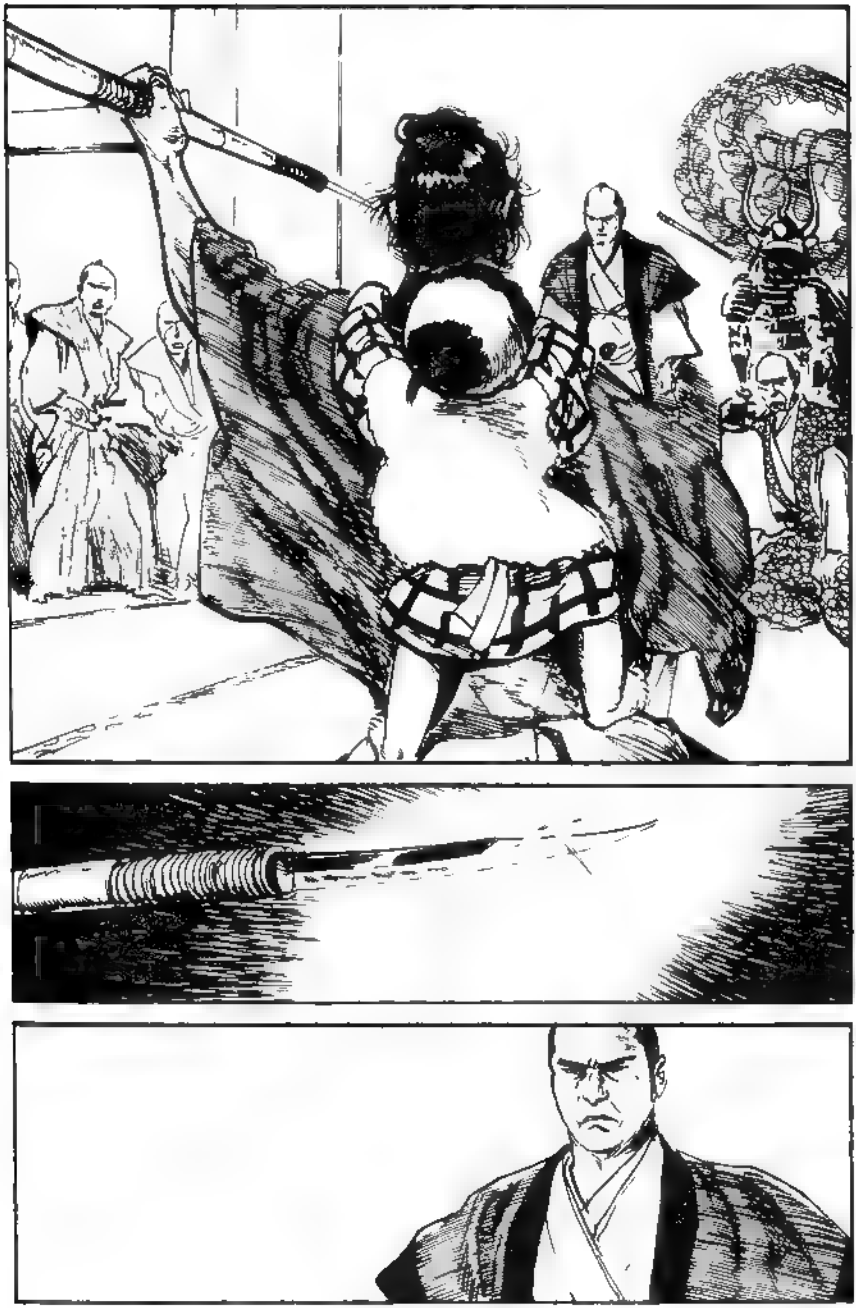


SHINNG
CHOK
CHOK
CHOK
D-DAMN YOU!
HIDDEN WEAPONS?! UNWORTHY OF A BUSHI! KILL HIM!

SSCHOK
SKUSSH
AUUGH!



THOKK
SHINGG
IT IS YOU WHO ARE UNWORTHY, LORD KURODA!



LISTEN WELL TO THESE WORDS!
THE ANCESTOR OF THE KURODA CLAN WAS SASAK. GENZA HIDEYOSHI, DESCENDENT OF THE EMPEROR UDA, IN THE DIRECT LINE OF THE ŌM. GENJI. YOUR WARRIOR INSPIRATION, KURODA JOSUI YOSHITAKA--

HOW DARE YOU?!
SILENCE!
LORD KURODA'S LIFE IS IN MY HAND!
KURODA JOSUI YOSHITAKA CONQUERED KYŪSHŪ, AND TOGETHER WITH HIS SON NAGAMASA, HE LEFT A WARRIOR LEGEND THAT STILL ECHOES ACROSS THE LAND!
WELL WAS IT SAID! "PEOPLE PRAISE HIM, PEOPLE FEAR HIM, PEOPLE RESPECT HIM. MIGHTY KURODA IS IN THE WEST!"

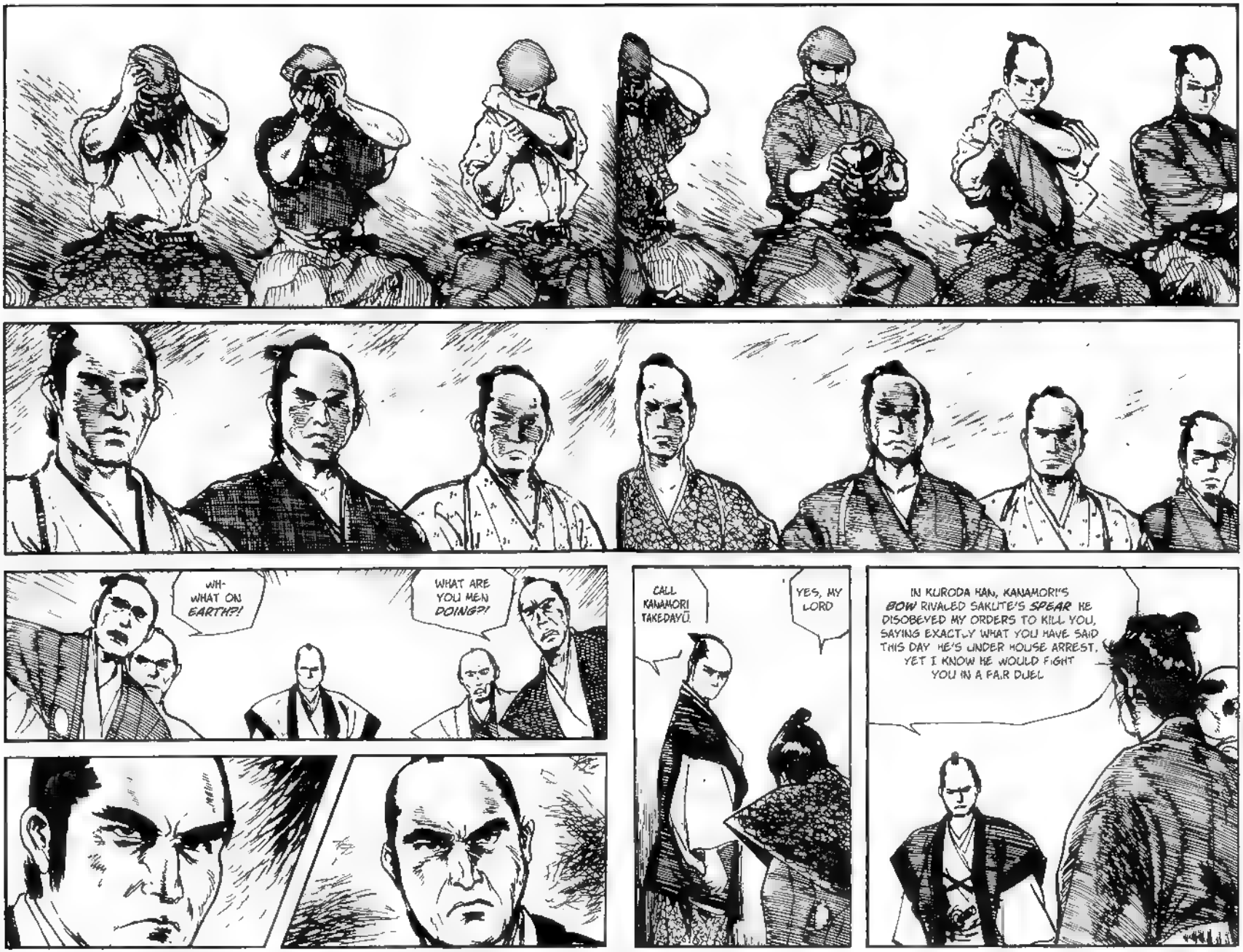
A WARRIOR FAMILY BEYOND COMPARE! HONORING SHIDŌ! DESPISING PLOTS AND TRICKERY! VALUING HONOR!
AND NOW? SCHEMING FOR HIGH POSITION? INGRATIATING YOURSELF WITH THE CORRUPT YAGYŪ? ATTEMPTING TO EXPLOIT THEIR WEAKNESSES TO MANIPULATE THEM?!
LORD KURODA HAS BECOME THE YAGYŪ'S HUNTING DOG BUT WHAT USE IS THE HOUND ONCE IT'S CAUGHT THE HARE?!
ARE YOU NOW SO FEEBLE YOU MUST CRAWL TO THE YAGYŪ?! IT'S NOT MY CONCERN, YET I MOURN THE KURODA NAME!

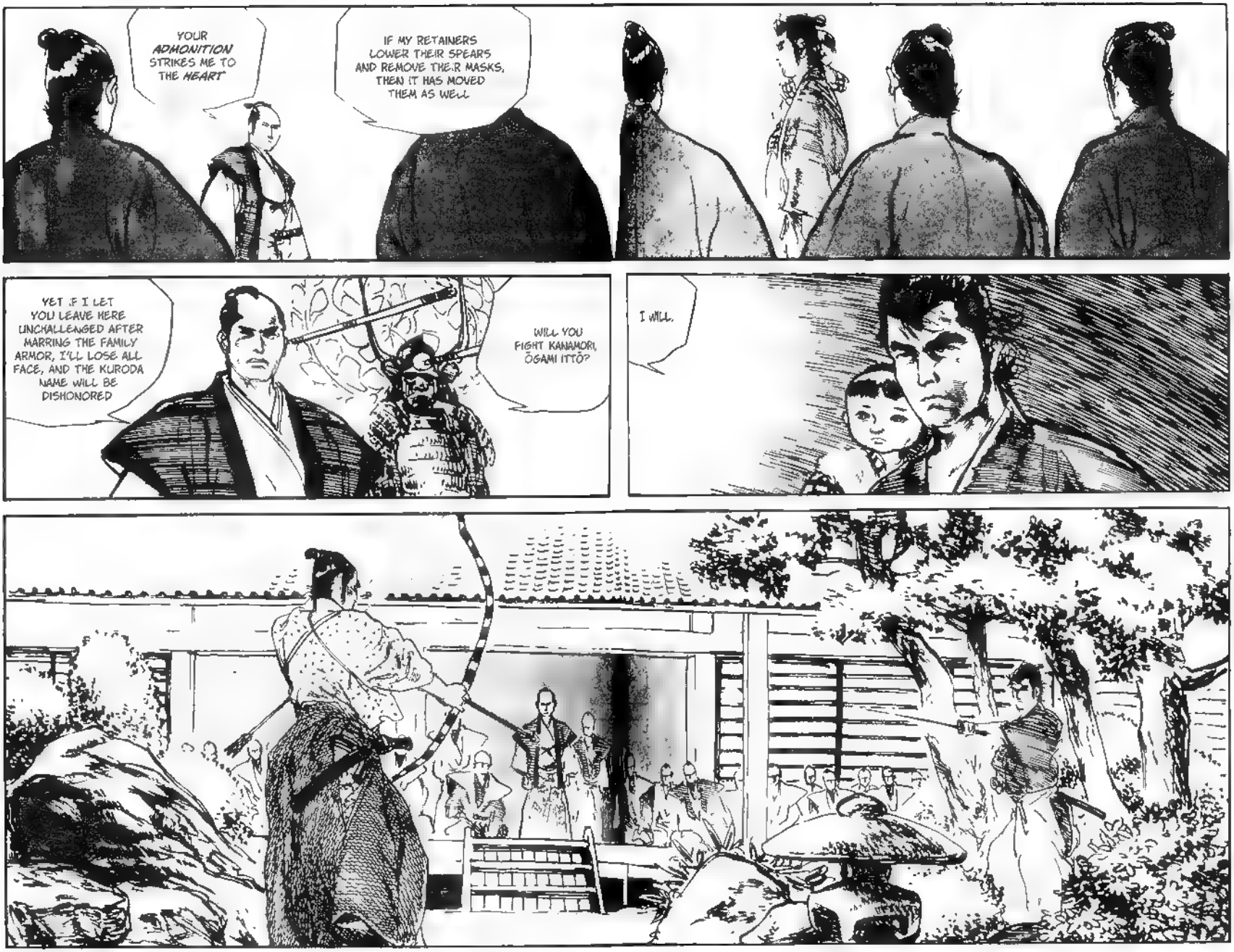
WELL WAS IT SAID! "WHERE GO THE BUFFALO HORNS OF KURODA'S BATTLE HELM, GODS AND DEMONS HIDE THEIR FACES! A MILLION MEN LEAP TO HIS COMMAND!"
SHALL WE ASK HIS ARMOR?!
IF IT ANSWERS "AYE," I'LL LOP MY SON'S HEAD FROM HIS SHOULDERS, AND CUT OPEN MY STOMACH ON THIS SPOT!

THE YAGYŪ?!

FWHIT
OR SHIDŌ?!
THOK
AAAHH!!

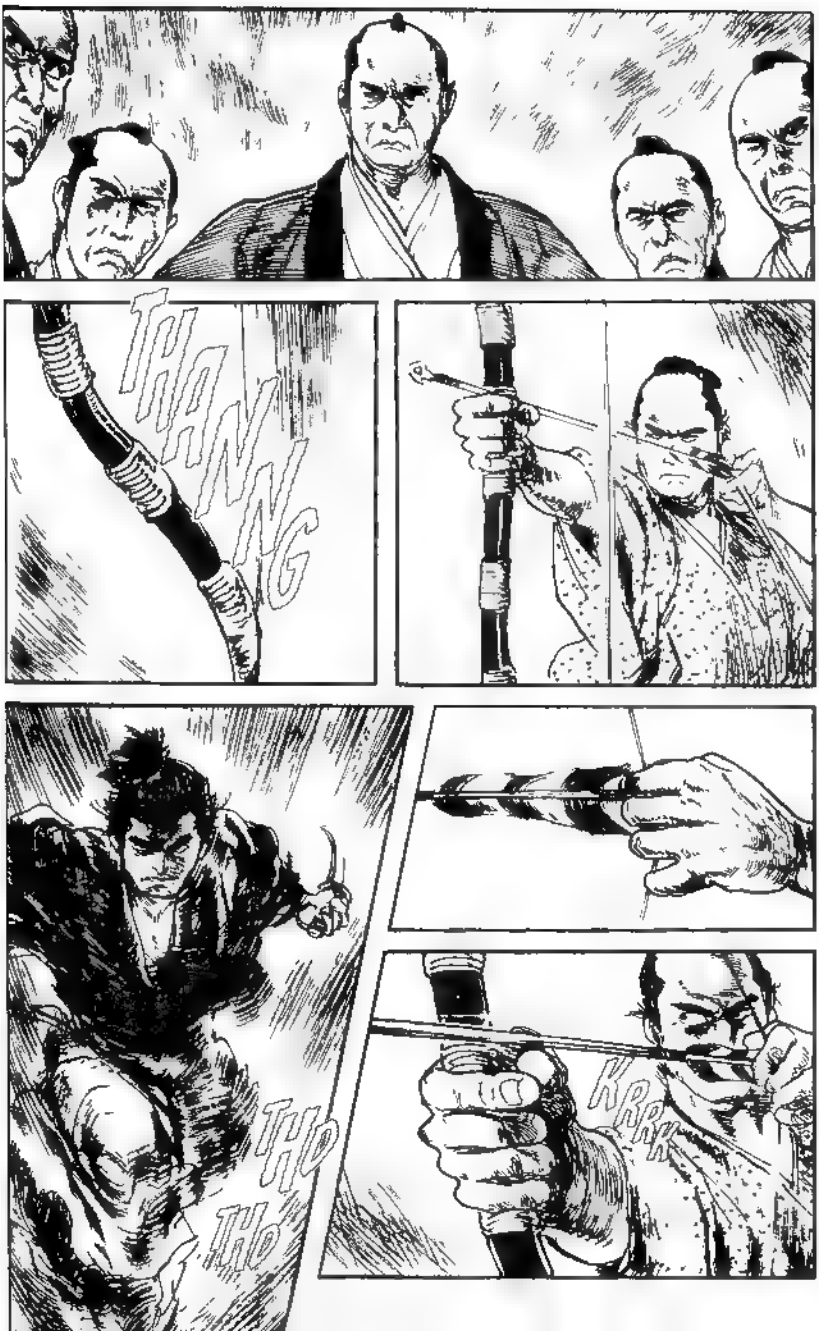
INSOLENT CUR!!
KILL HIM!
WHAT'S WRONG?! YOU'RE AFRAID?! COWARDS!!
K KILL H.M!

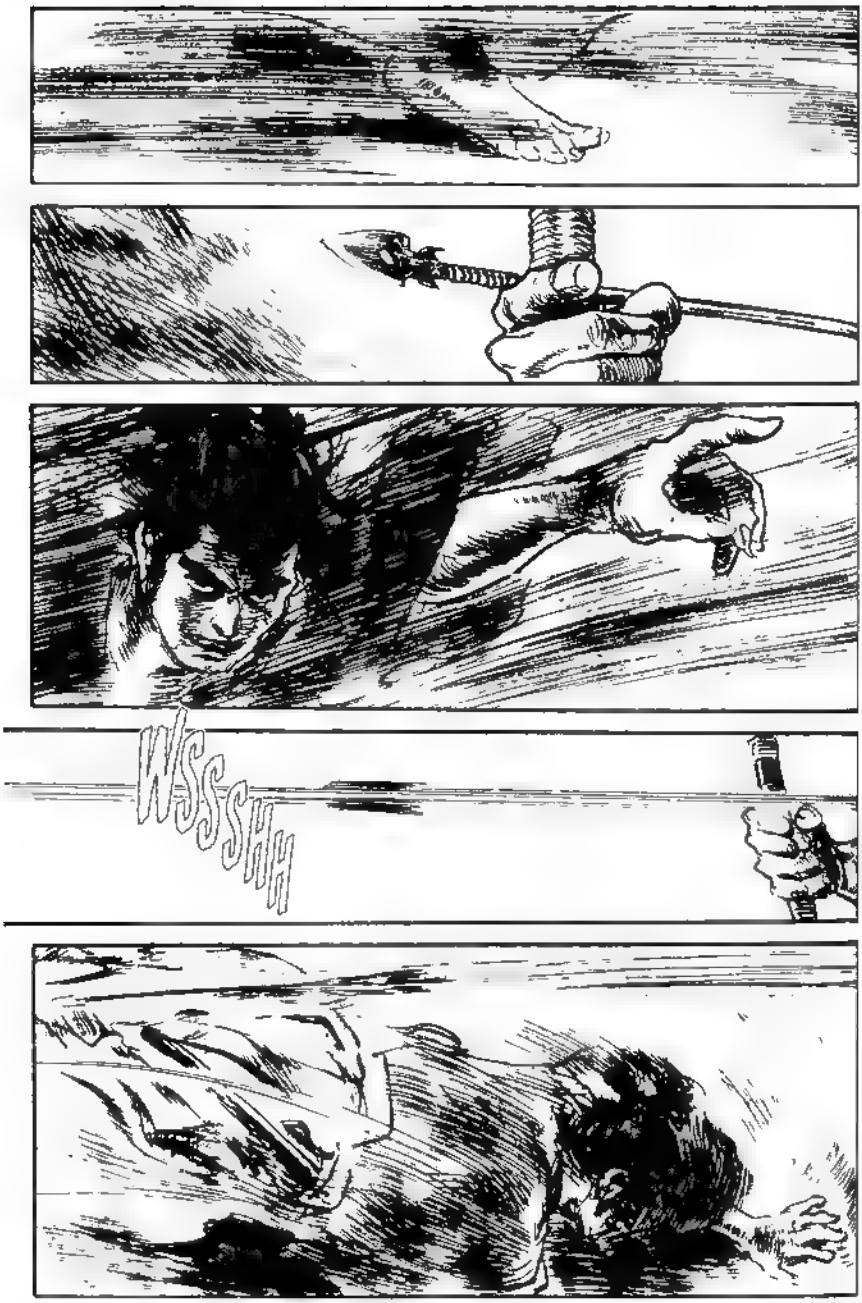

WH-
WHAT ON
EARTH?!
WHAT ARE
YOU MEN
DOING?!
CALL
KANAMORI
TAKEDAYŪ.
YES, MY
LORD
IN KURODA HAN, KANAMORI'S
BOW RIVALED SAKUTE'S SPEAR. HE
DISOBEYED MY ORDERS TO KILL YOU,
SAYING EXACTLY WHAT YOU HAVE SAID
THIS DAY. HE'S UNDER HOUSE ARREST.
YET I KNOW HE WOULD FIGHT
YOU IN A FAIR DUEL

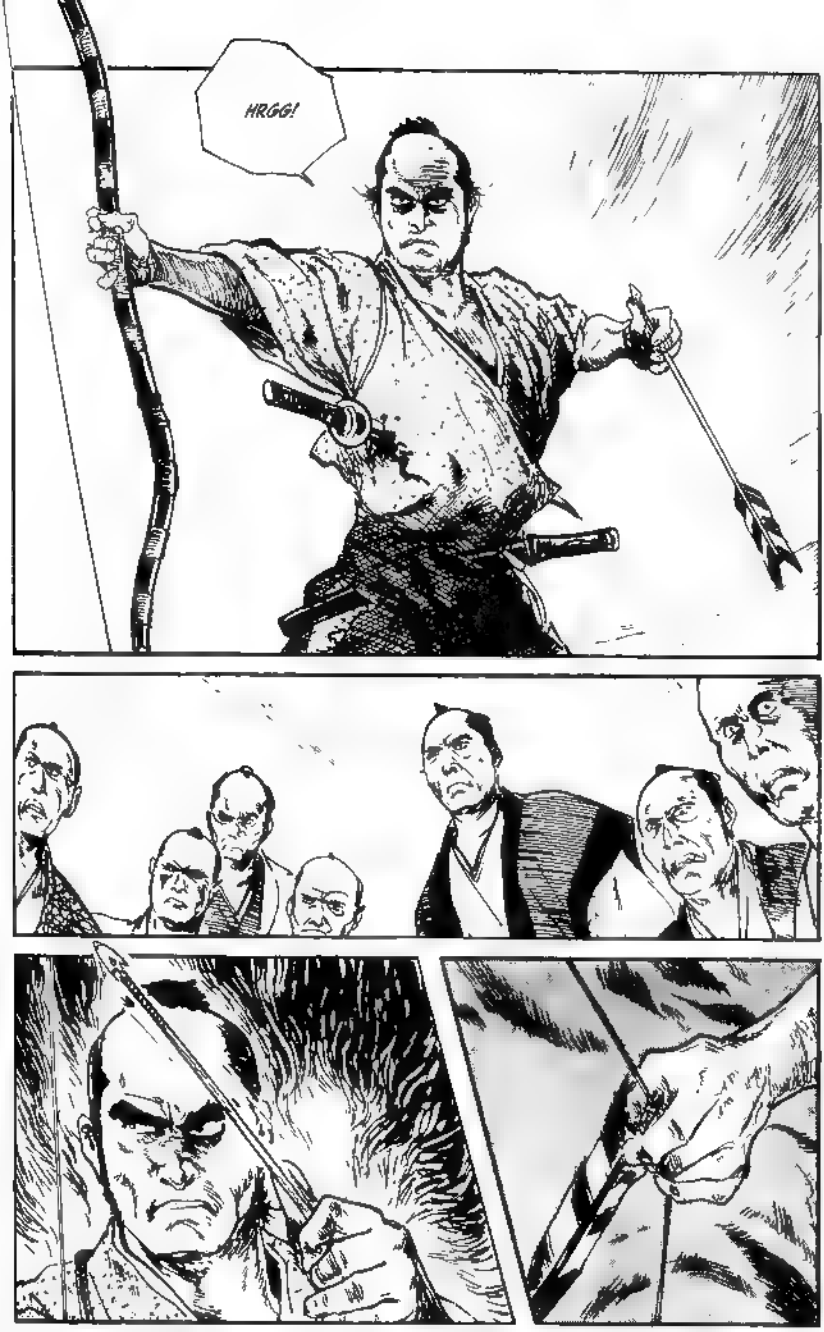

YOUR ADMONITION STRIKES ME TO THE HEART
IF MY RETAINERS LOWER THEIR SPEARS AND REMOVE THEIR MASKS, THEN IT HAS MOVED THEM AS WELL
YET IF I LET YOU LEAVE HERE UNCHALLENGED AFTER MARRING THE FAMILY ARMOR, I'LL LOSE ALL FACE, AND THE KURODA NAME WILL BE DISHONORED
WILL YOU FIGHT KANAMORI, ŌGAMI ITTŌ?
I WILL.

THANNG

FWIP!!!
KRK
KRRRK


THANNG
KRRK
THO
THO


WSSSHH

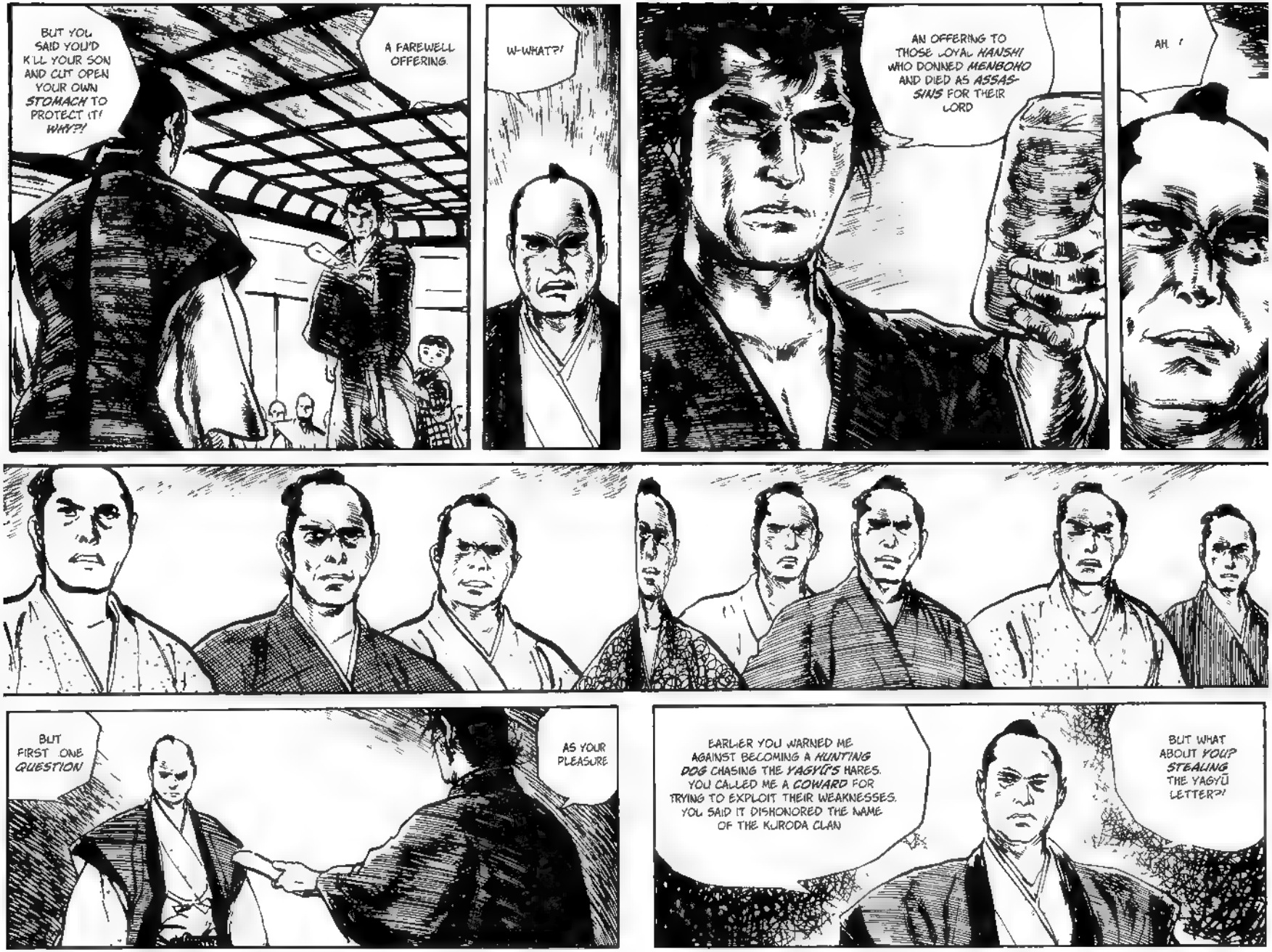

HRGG!

KRRK!
KRRK!

NGG
VWHSSH
THUK

I LOSE YOU COULD HAVE BLOCKED THAT ARROW, AND YET
SUCH RESPECT FOR SHIDŌ, SUCH COMPASSION FOR YOUR FOE!
TRAVEL WHERE YOU WILL
KURODA WILL NEVER AGAIN TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST YOU, NOR WILL WE WORK WITH THE YAGYŪ.

HERE—
THE YAGYŪ
LETTER.


BUT YOU SAID YOU'D KILL YOUR SON AND CUT OPEN YOUR OWN STOMACH TO PROTECT IT! WHY?!
A FAREWELL OFFERING.
W-WHAT?!
AN OFFERING TO THOSE LOYAL HANSHI WHO DONNED MENBOHO AND DIED AS ASSASSINS FOR THEIR LORD
AH...
BUT FIRST ONE QUESTION
AS YOUR PLEASURE
EARLIER YOU WARNED ME AGAINST BECOMING A HUNTING DOG CHASING THE YAGYŪ'S HARES. YOU CALLED ME A COWARD FOR TRYING TO EXPLOIT THEIR WEAKNESSES. YOU SAID IT DISHONORED THE NAME OF THE KURODA CLAN
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU? STEALING THE YAGYŪ LETTER?!

USING YOUR ENEMY'S WEAKNESSES TO ATTACK HIM, AND SAVE YOUR OWN LIVES?!
DOES NOT THIS OFFERING BRAND THE DEAD WITH YOUR OWN COWARDICE?
YOU CONTRADICT YOURSELF, ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
FATHER AND SON, WE LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ, CHOOSING NEITHER THE SIX PATHS NOR THE FOUR LIVES
NOT SAMURAI NOT FOLLOWERS OF SHIDŌ NOT HUMAN!

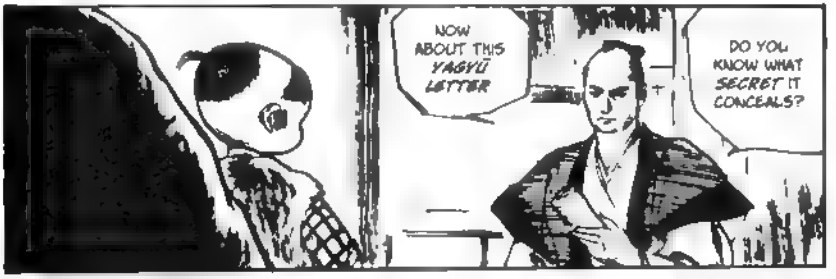
WALKING THE DEMON ROAD FOR OUR QUEST, WE WILL DO ANYTHING TO DESTROY THE YAGYŪ. WE HAVE NO SHAME.
LIKEWISE, YOUR HANSHI WHO ATTACKED US WERE ORDERED BY THEIR LORD TO BE ASSASSINS THEY, TOO, NO LONGER SAMURAI THEY, TOO, ABANDONING BUSHIDŌ
ACCEPT THIS OFFERING
FROM ONE ASSASSIN TO ANOTHER.
I UNDERSTAND. AND,
AS ONE TURN DESERVES ANOTHER, PLEASE STAY

I NEED NO SAKE
WE SHALL PARTAKE OF THE REST

PARDON
WHEN DARKNESS FALLS, OUR LORD DESIRES TO SIT WITH YOU IN CONVERSATION.
I SHALL RETURN TO GUIDE YOU
"WHEN DARKNESS FALLS" ?

THIS IS MAFUKU SAIBÉ, MY CLOSEST ADVISOR.

I'M HONORED


NOW ABOUT THIS YAGYÜ LETTER
DO YOU KNOW WHAT SECRET IT CONCEALS?

I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING, TO NO AVAIL.
NOT SURPRISING I DOUBT THERE'S A SCHOLAR IN THE LAND WHO COULD DISCOVER IT
THEN DOES LORD KURODA KNOW THE SECRET?
I DO
THAT'S WHY I KEPT YOU WAITING UNTIL NIGHTFALL.

回状之参

癸卯六月弐日

禁中陣儀行ワル

上卿 唐橋大納言業勝卿

奉行職事 烏丸頭左中弁光賢

弁 小河坊城左中弁俊昌ナリ

陣儀ハ勧修寺宰相光豊卿

勅使トシテ伏見城ニ参向有

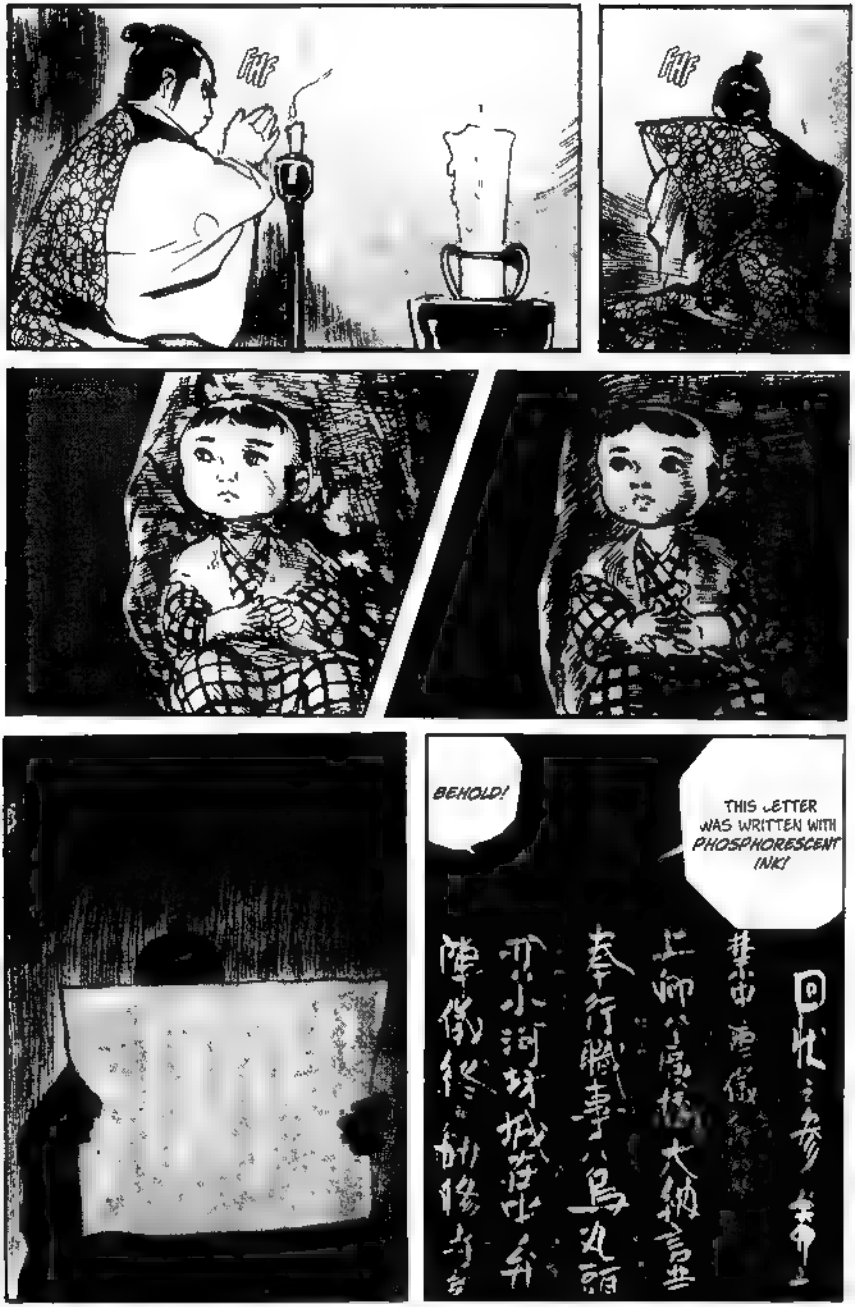
宜旨ノ儀ハ別紙ニテ報之如ク

右座候

仍ニ格別事無之卑隠ニ打過候

京都所司代

板倉伊予守重昌 判


FHF
FHF
BEHOLD!
THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN WITH PHOSPHORESCENT INK!

I HAVE ALREADY ASCERTAINED THAT MUCH.
SOME FORM OF PHOSPHORESCENT FUNGUS HAS BEEN GROUND AND MIXED INTO THE INK. MOST SUCH FUNGUS *REFLECT* LIGHT, BUT THE INGREDIENTS ADDED TO THIS *SUMI* SEEM TO ABSORB IT, AND BECOME A LIGHT SOURCE OF THEIR OWN.
THE INK ABSORBS LIGHT BY DAY, AND RELEASES IT AGAIN IN THE DARK AS GLOWING LETTERS.
AGAIN YOU IMPRESS ME, ŌGAMI ITTŌ

EVERY YEAR, AT THE SIXTH HOUR ON NEW YEAR'S DAY, WE *FUDAI DAIMYŌ*, BEGINNING WITH THE THREE *SANKYŌ* CLANS, GO TO EDO CASTLE TO OFFER OUR RESPECTS TO THE SHŌGUN'S FAMILY AT THAT TIME. WE RECEIVE A BLOCK OF *SUMI* INK IMPRINTED WITH THE HOLLYHOCK CREST OF THE TOKUGAWA. IT IS THE *YAGYŪ* WHO MAKE THAT INK, AND, AS YOU HAVE FOUND, IT IS INK THAT GLOWS IN THE DARK. ALL OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE *FUDAI DAIMYŌ* AND THE SHŌGUN MUST BE WRITTEN WITH IT. HOW LIKE THE YAGYŪ TO COME UP WITH SUCH A SUBTLE TRICK!
ONE DAY I CHANCED TO NOTICE THAT A LETTER I HAD WRITTEN WAS GLOWING IN THE DARK. SURPRISED, I INVESTIGATED FURTHER.
UNFORTUNATELY THAT WASN'T OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE, AND THUS PROVED NOTHING.
BUT THIS. *THIS* IS DIRECT FROM THE *KYŌTO SHIDAI* TO THE *SHŌGUN* AND IT CONTAINS A *CLUE* THAT EXPOSES A *DREADFUL* SECRET

fwwt
HRGK!
NNG!
G-GUARDS!!

TONO?!

H-MEN!
ŌGAMI ITTŌ'S KILLED LORD KURODA!

WHAT?!
YOU BASTARD!

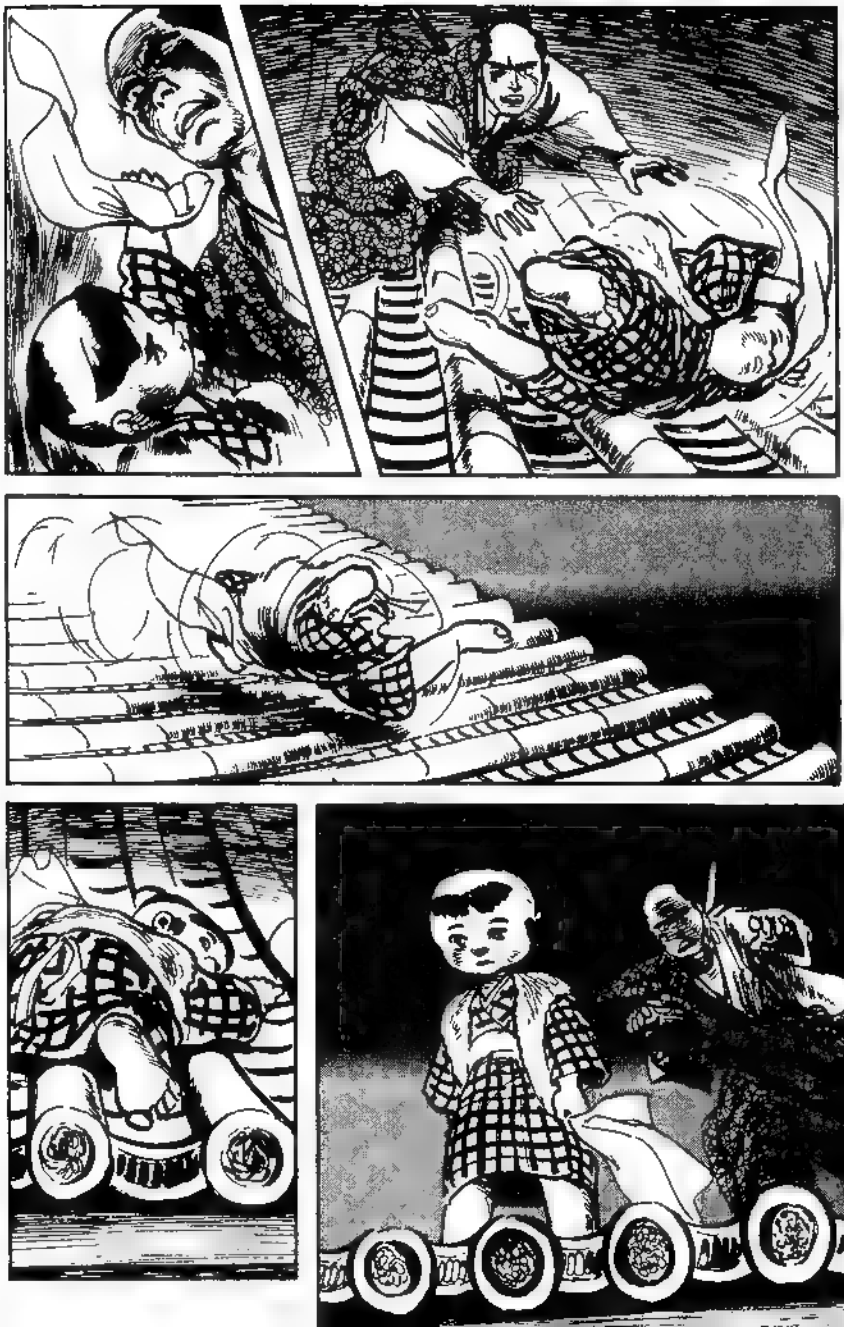
T-TONO!!
HE'S MURDERED OUR LORD!
NNNG. . GET BACK THE LETTER
K-KILL HIM! KILL ŌGAMI ITTŌ!

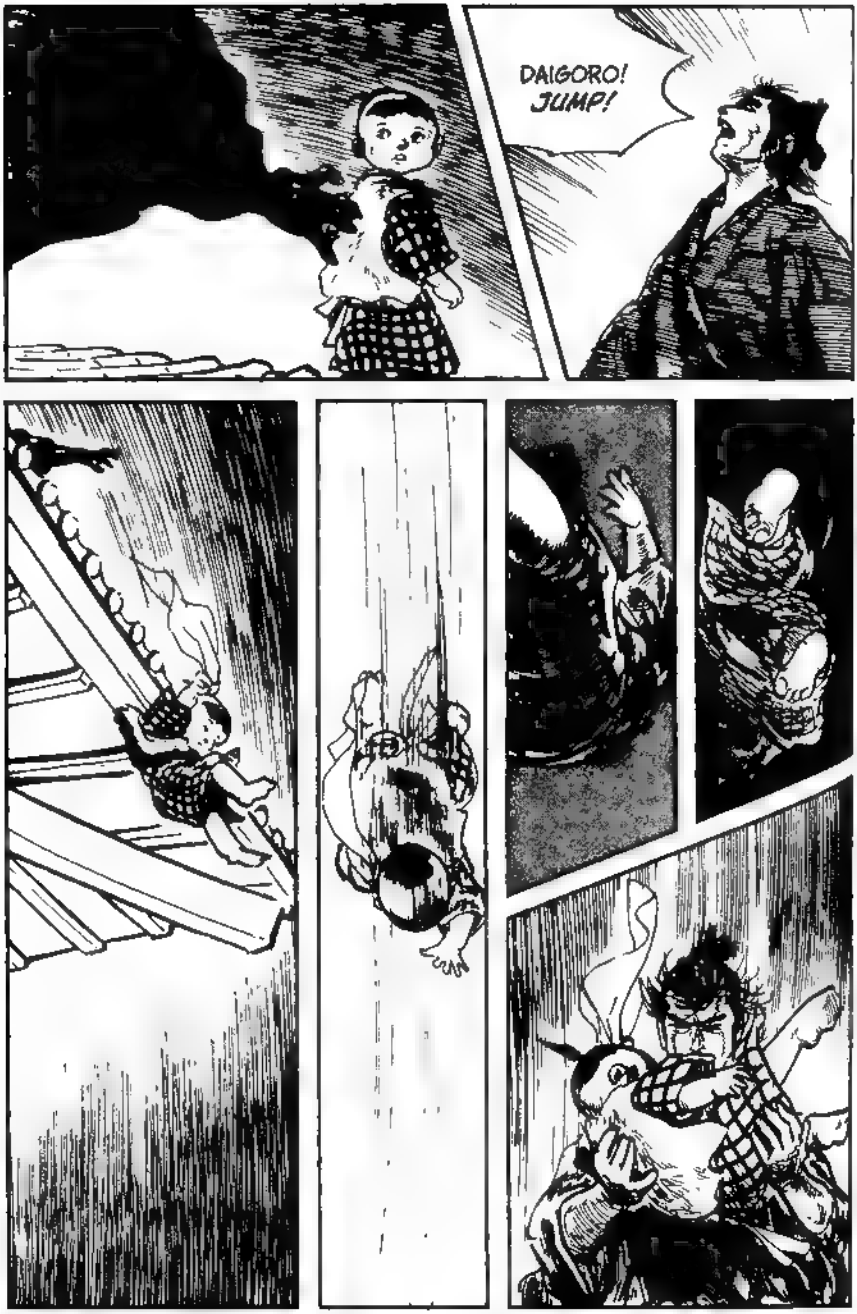
IT IS SAID THAT THE KUROKUWA SPIES SEND AGENTS INTO EVERY HAN, SETTLING THERE FOR GENERATIONS.
THE DEDICATION OF THE SATO-IRI NINJA! PASSING THEIR MISSION FROM FATHER TO SON, SON TO GRANDSON!! WHO WOULD SUSPECT A FAMILY THAT'S LIVED THERE FOR DECADES, EVEN FOR CENTURIES?! THEY PUT DOWN THEIR ROOTS, GROWING, WITHERING, FLOURISHING AGAIN. LIKE THE GRASS. SUCH IS YOUR SATO-IRI NINJA.
IMAFUKU SAIBĒ! YOU PUT DOWN YOUR ROOTS IN KURODA HAN— YOU'RE KUROKUWA GRASS!
YOU HOLD THE PROOF OUR YAGYŪ LETTER!
DAMN YOU!!

KRAK!
PAPA!

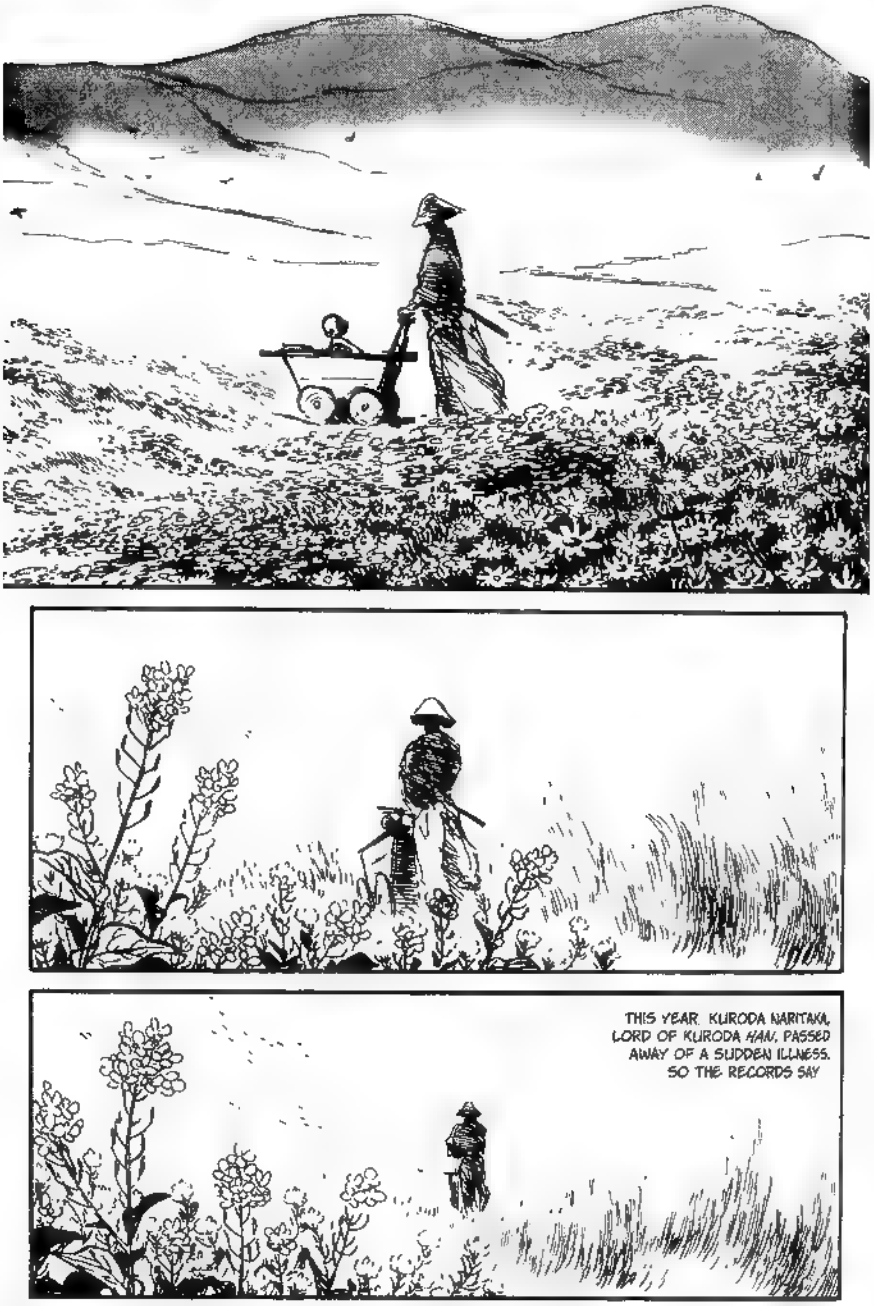
SHWG!

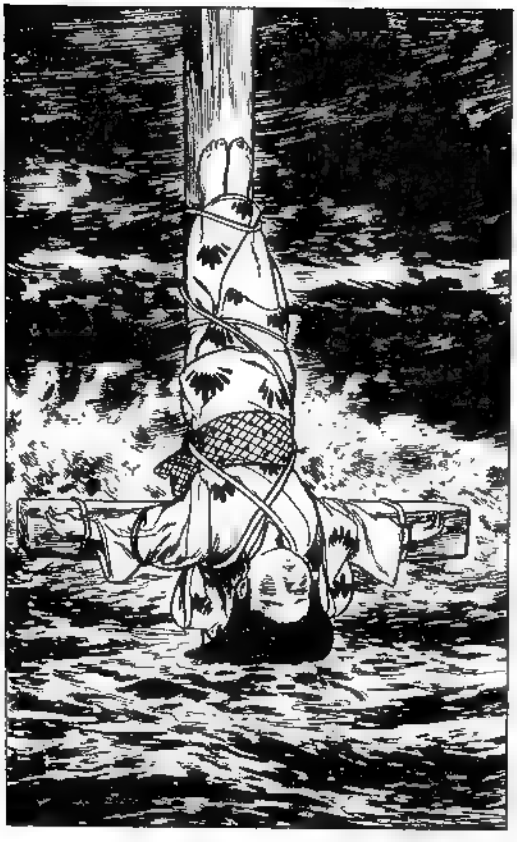
WHSSS!
CHOKK
AGK!




DAIGORO!
JUMP!

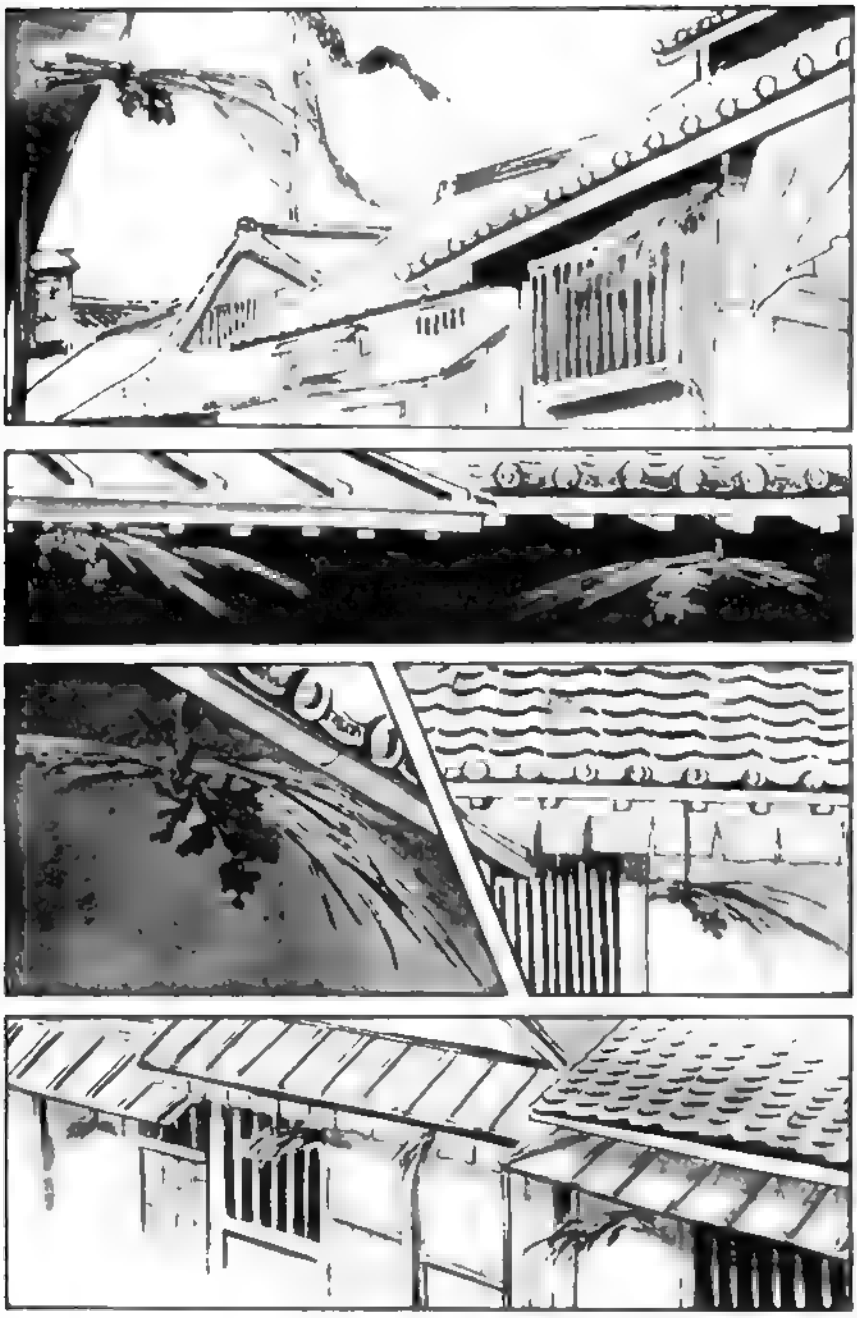
PAPA!
MM..


THIS YEAR, KURODA NARITAKA, LORD OF KURODA *HAN*, PASSED AWAY OF A SUDDEN ILLNESS. SO THE RECORDS SAY



the seventy-second

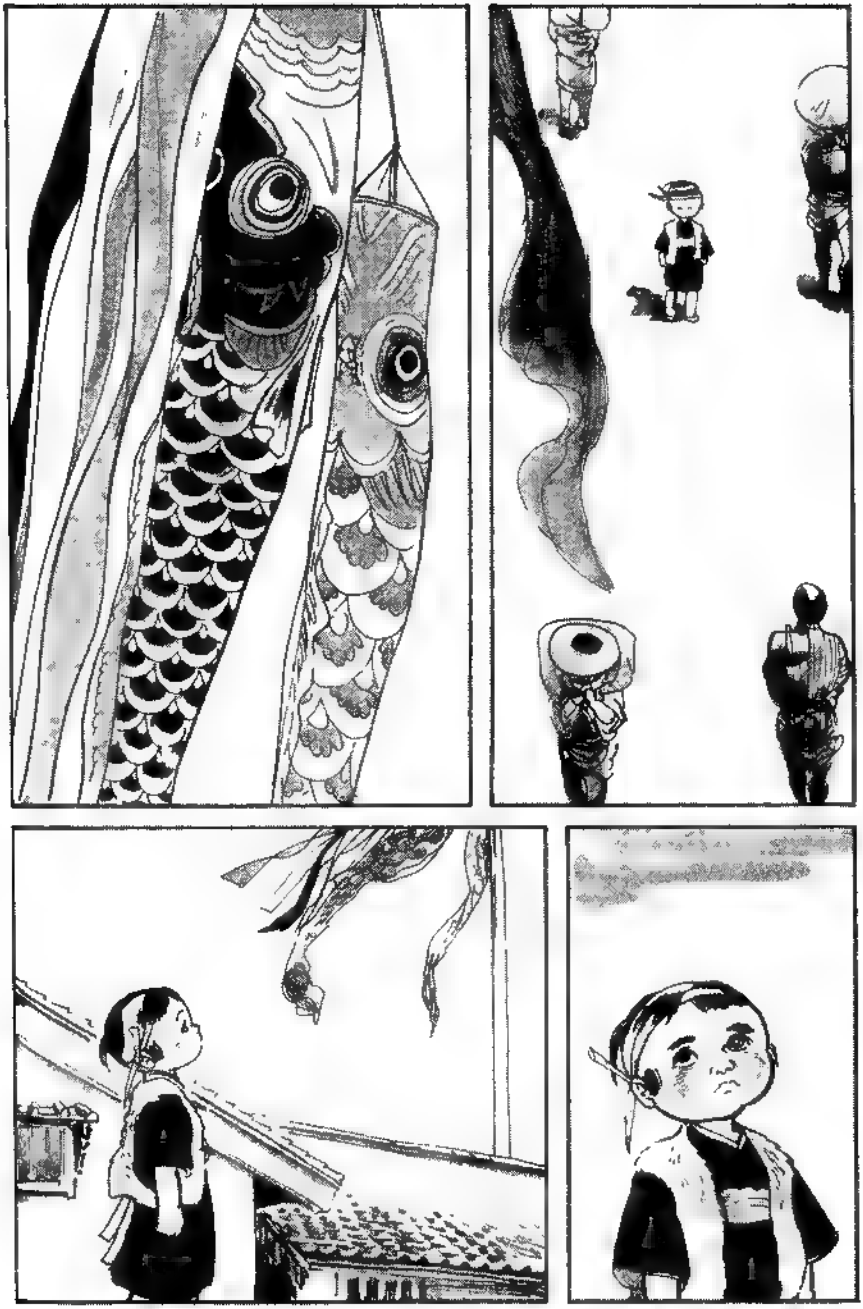
Day of the Demons

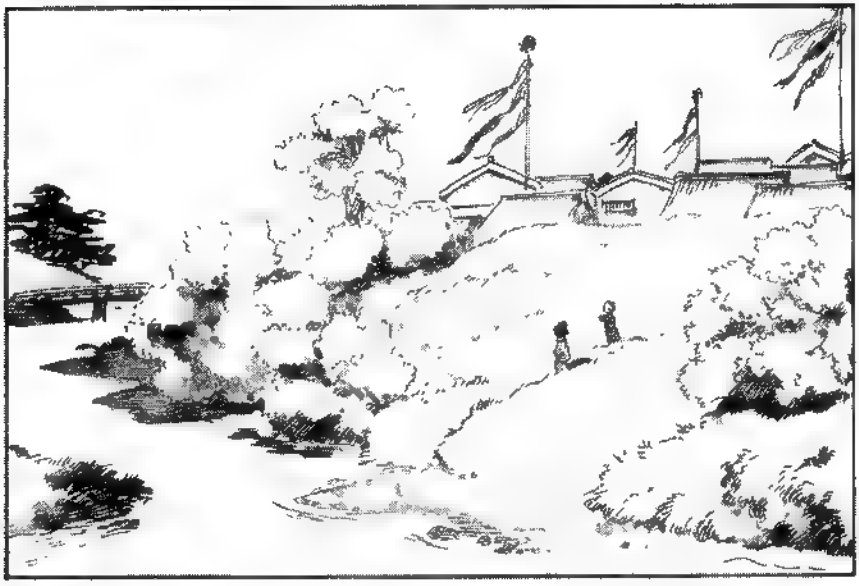


YAAH!
YAIIII!
WAHHH!
YAHH!

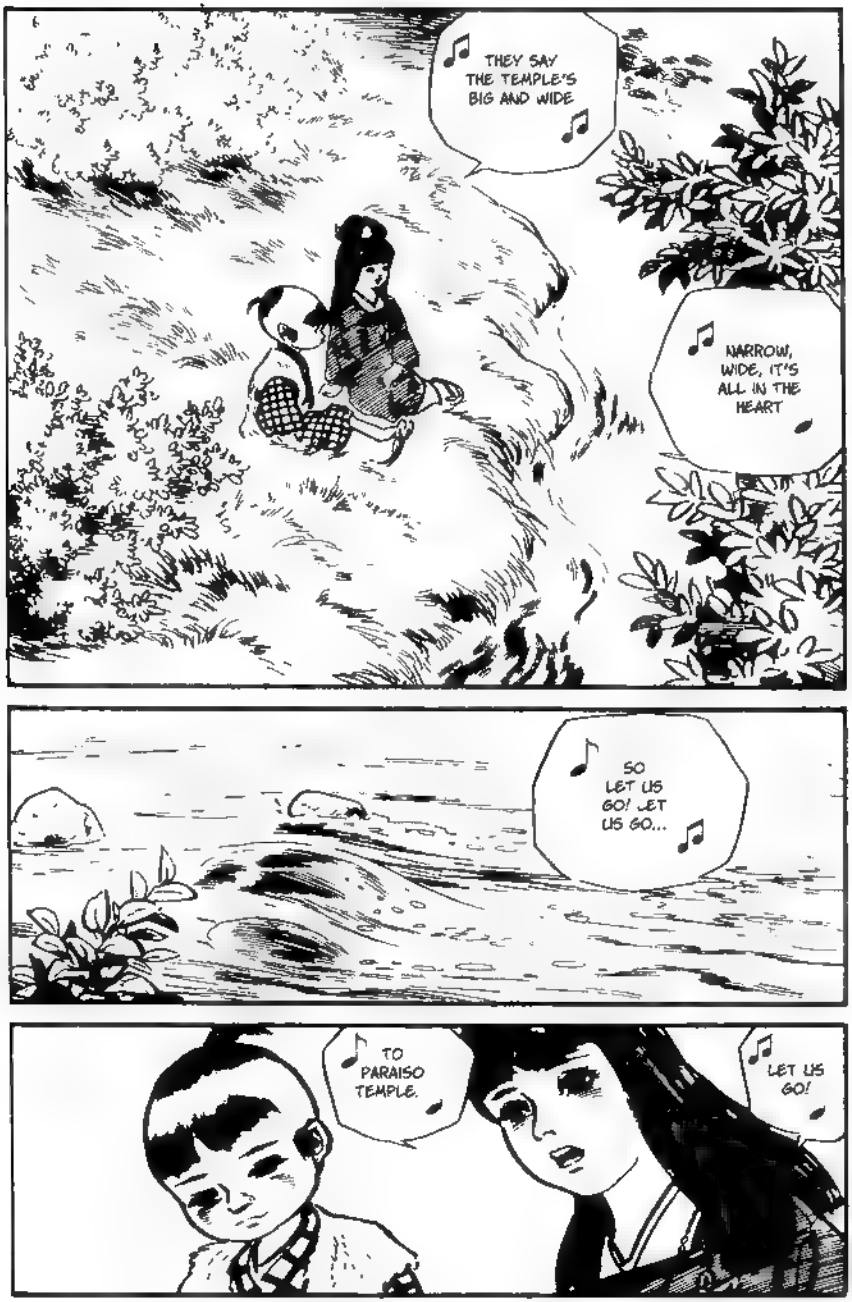
YAAH!!
WAHHH!

SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH





LET US GO.
LET US GO.
TO PARAISO TEMPLE. LET US GO!
THEY CALL IT THE TEMPLE OF PARADISE..

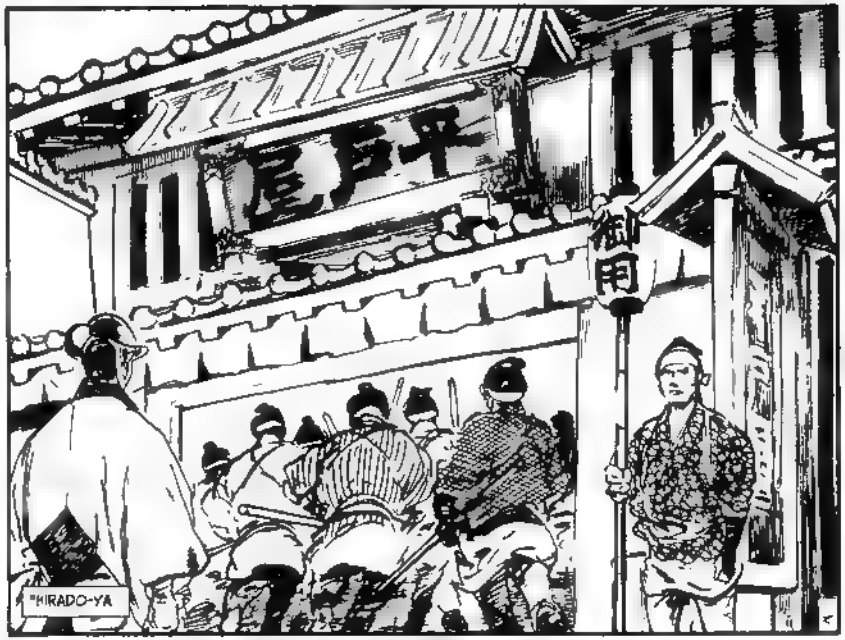

THEY SAY THE TEMPLE'S BIG AND WIDE
NARROW, WIDE, IT'S ALL IN THE HEART
SO LET US GO! LET US GO...
TO PARAISO TEMPLE.
LET US GO!

THEY CALL IT THE TEMPLE OF PARADISE. .
THEY SAY THE TEMPLE'S BIG AND WIDE. .
NARROW, WIDE, IT'S ALL IN THE HEART .

FOLLOWING THE SHIMABARA UPRISING OF 1637-38 THE TOKUGAWA SHŌGUNATE INTENSIFIED ITS BAN ON THE CHRISTIANS OF NAGASAKI AND THE SURROUNDING TERRITORIES.

御用
御用
SHŪMON-ARATAME AND NINBETSU-ARATAME, HOUSEHOLD BY HOUSEHOLD INTERROGATIONS ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, WERE STRICTLY ENFORCED SOON THE SHŌGUNAL INQUISITION OFFICE BEGAN OFFERING CASH REWARDS TO INFORMERS. AND KIRISHITAN-GARI, THE "CHRISTIAN HUNTS" BEGAN IN EARNEST
*GO-YŌ

FOR A BATEREN; FOREIGN PADRE MISSIONARY—
TWO HUNDRED PIECES OF SILVER.
FOR AN IRUMAN: ASSISTANT IRMÃO MISSIONARY—
ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF SILVER
FOR A KIRISHITAN BELIEVER—
FIFTY PIECES OF SILVER.
*HIRADO-YA
KIMONO WHOLESALER


平戸屋
御用
*HIRADO-YA

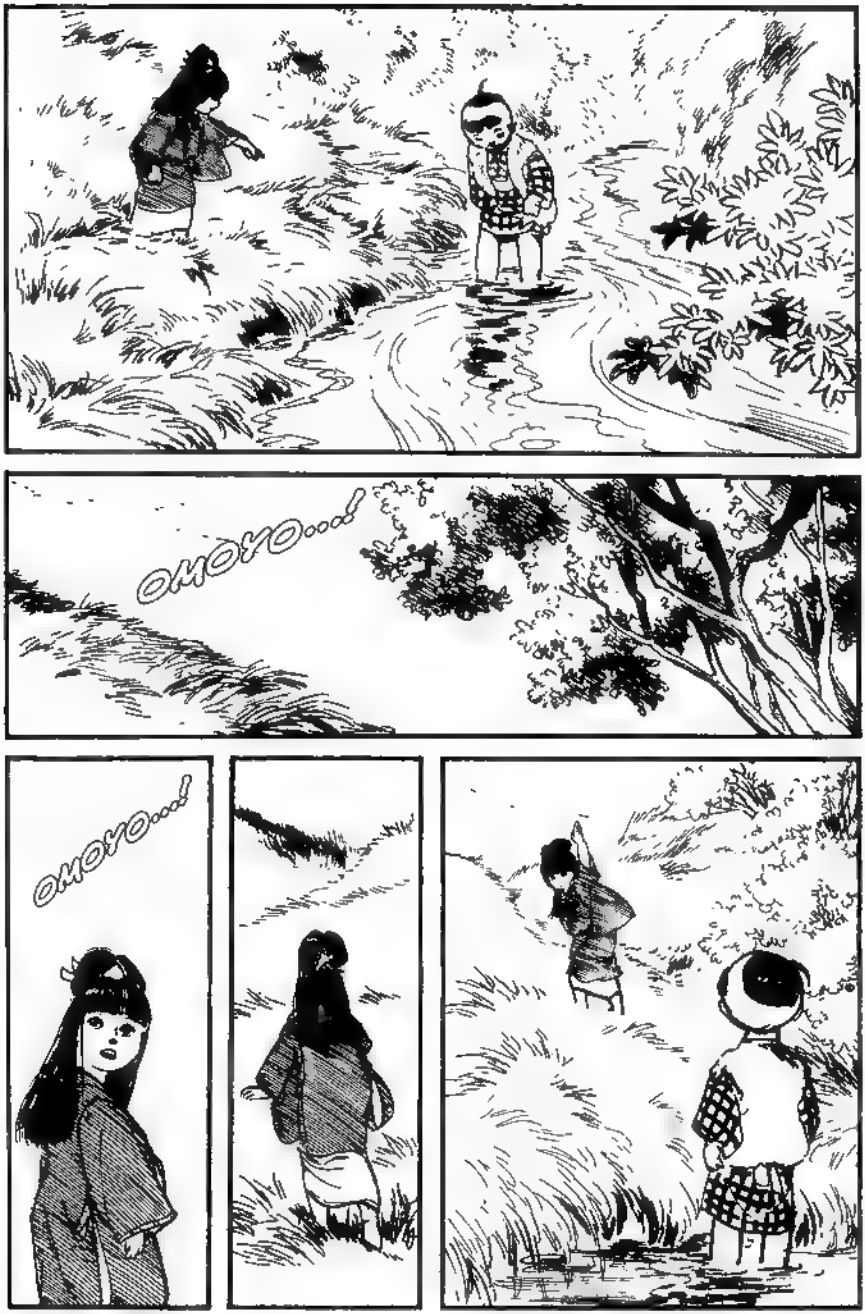
GO-YŌ!!
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
W-WHAT?!

EEEK!!

SHŪMON ARATAME!
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
?!

HRM! THIS CLINCHES IT- CHRISTIANS!
OVER HERE, SIR! MORE EVIDENCE!
IN RESPONSE TO THE DEEPENING OPPRESSION AND PERSECUTION, CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS MADE A SHOW OF RETURNING TO BUDDHISM.
BUT THEY STILL FOLLOWED THE LORD'S WORD AND KEPT IMAGES OF YASO (JESUS) AND SEIBO (THE VIRGIN MARY), DISGUISED AS BUDDHIST DIETIES.

THEY HAVE A DAUGHTER.
FIND HER! SHE'LL PROBABLY BE PLAYING NEARBY!
HAH...?!
TRY TO ESCAPE, WILL YOU?! AFTER HER!


OHOYO...!
OHOYO...!

OMOYO...!!
RUN!!
RUN, OMOYO!

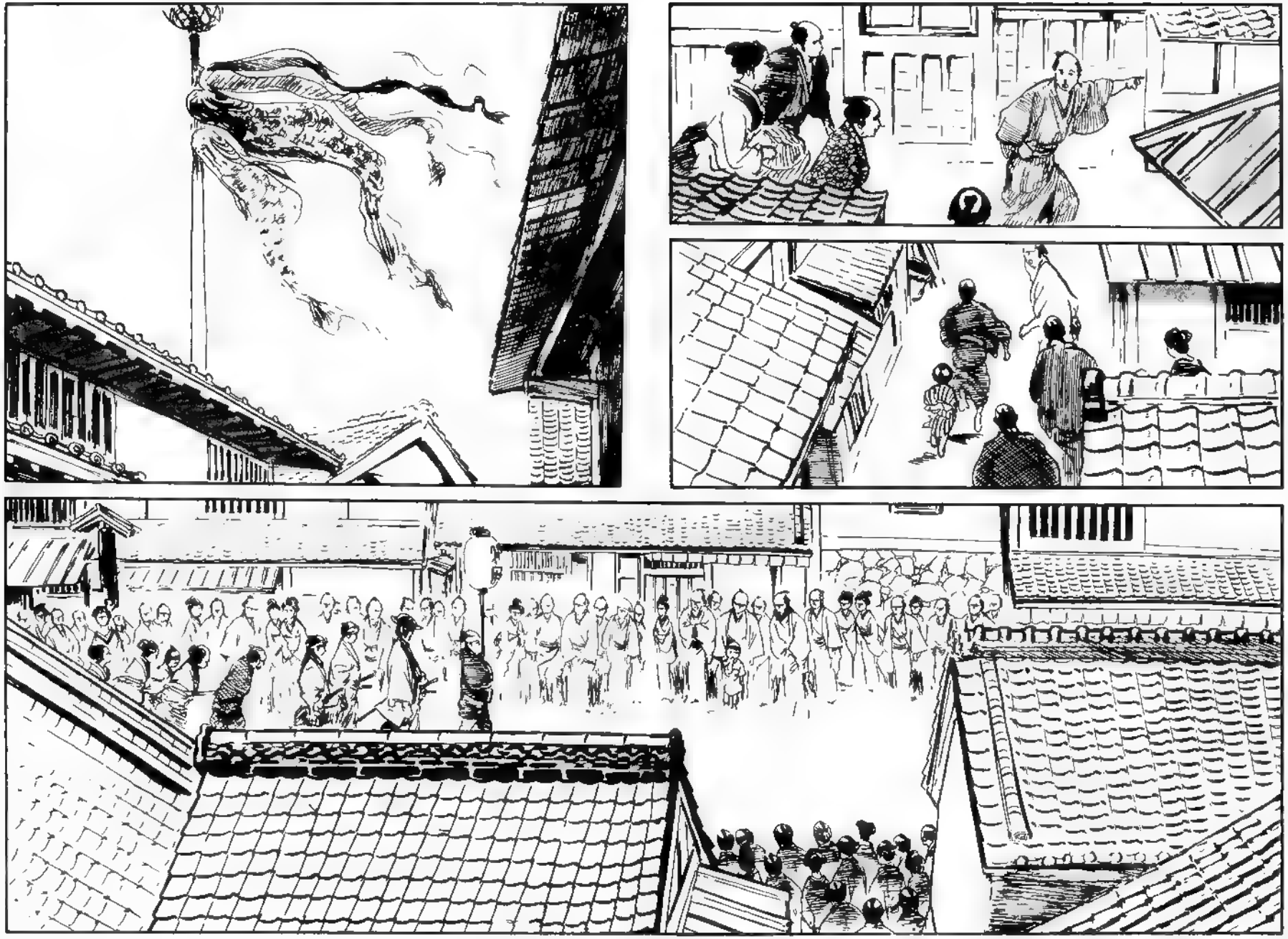
OMOYO . !!
HRAN!
SKASH
AAII!

OMOYO
. . !

T-TAKE HER TAKE HER TO RIZAEMON. PEASANT .IN ŌMURA.

M-MAMA?
MAMA!
MAMA...!!

MOVE, BOY
IF YOU DON'T, WE'LL HAUL YOU IN AS A KIRISHITAN!
THEY WERE BOUND TOGETHER. THE BONDS OF A GIFT OF KASHIWA CANDY

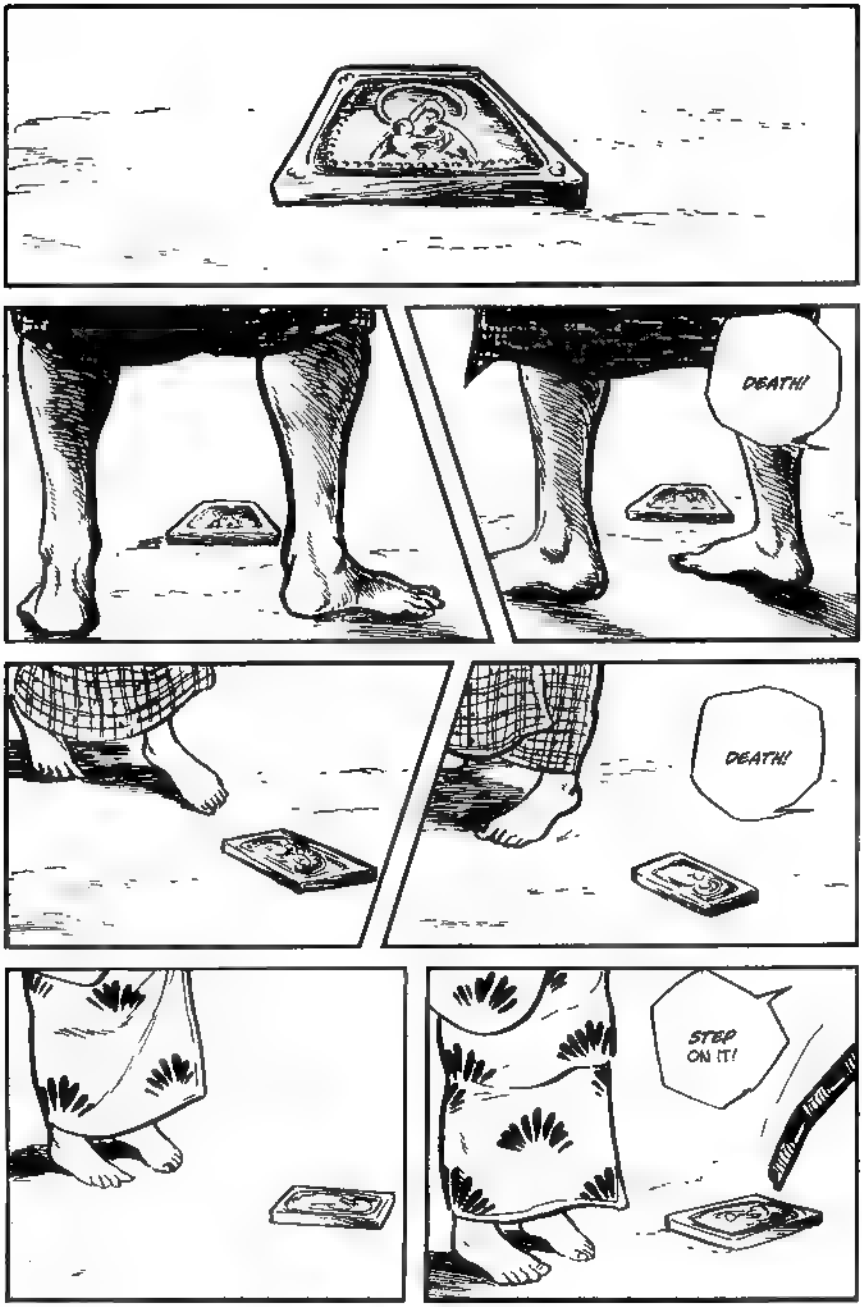


日田代官所
HITA DAIKANSHO

YOU!
GET UP!

STEP ON IT
IF YOU DON'T IT'S THE BEACH FOR YOU.
RIGHT DEATH!

AHH..!!
F-FORGIVE ME, HOLY VIRGIN...
DEATH!


DEATH!
DEATH!
STEP ON IT!

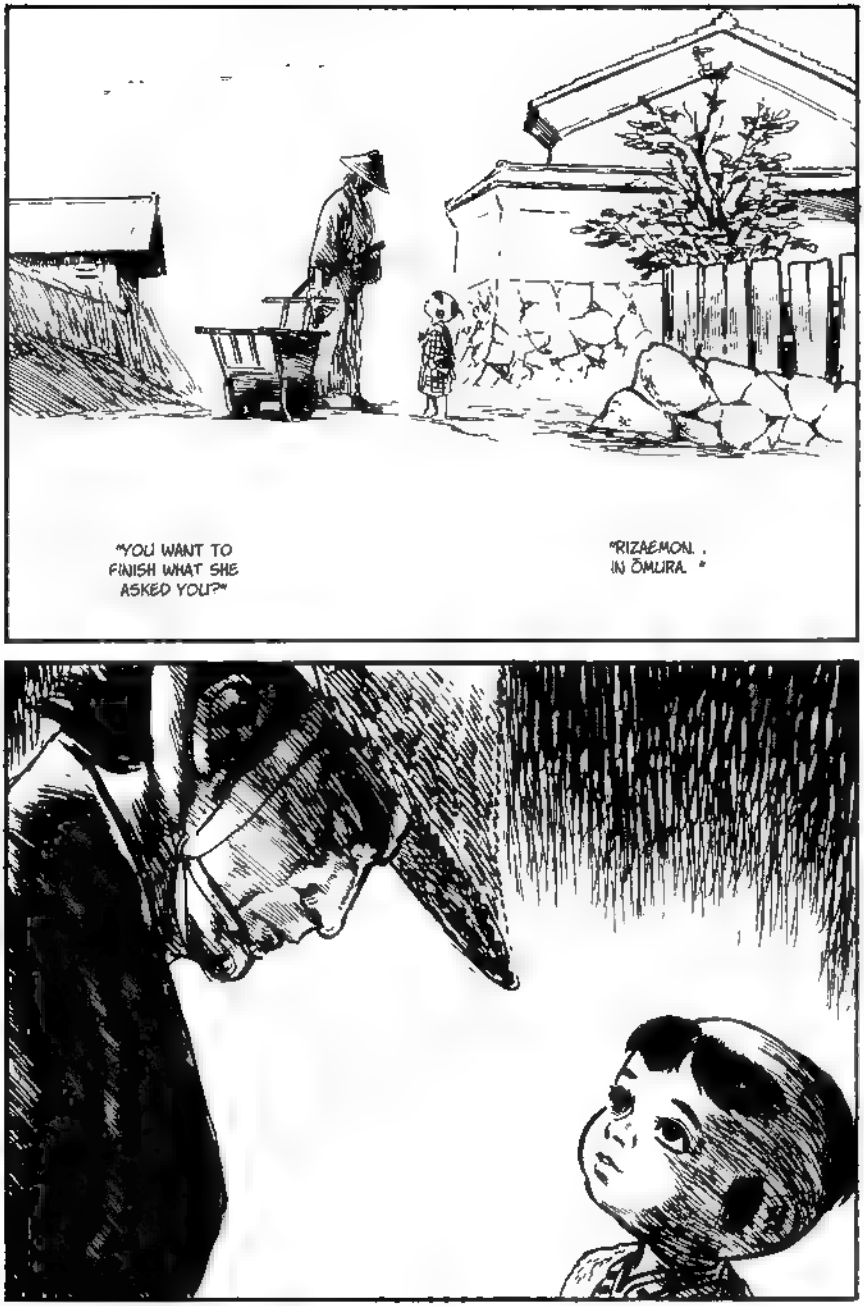
IF YOU DON'T STEP ON IT, YOU'LL DIE! UNDERSTAND?!
VERY WELL— DEATH!!
O-OMOYO ...!!

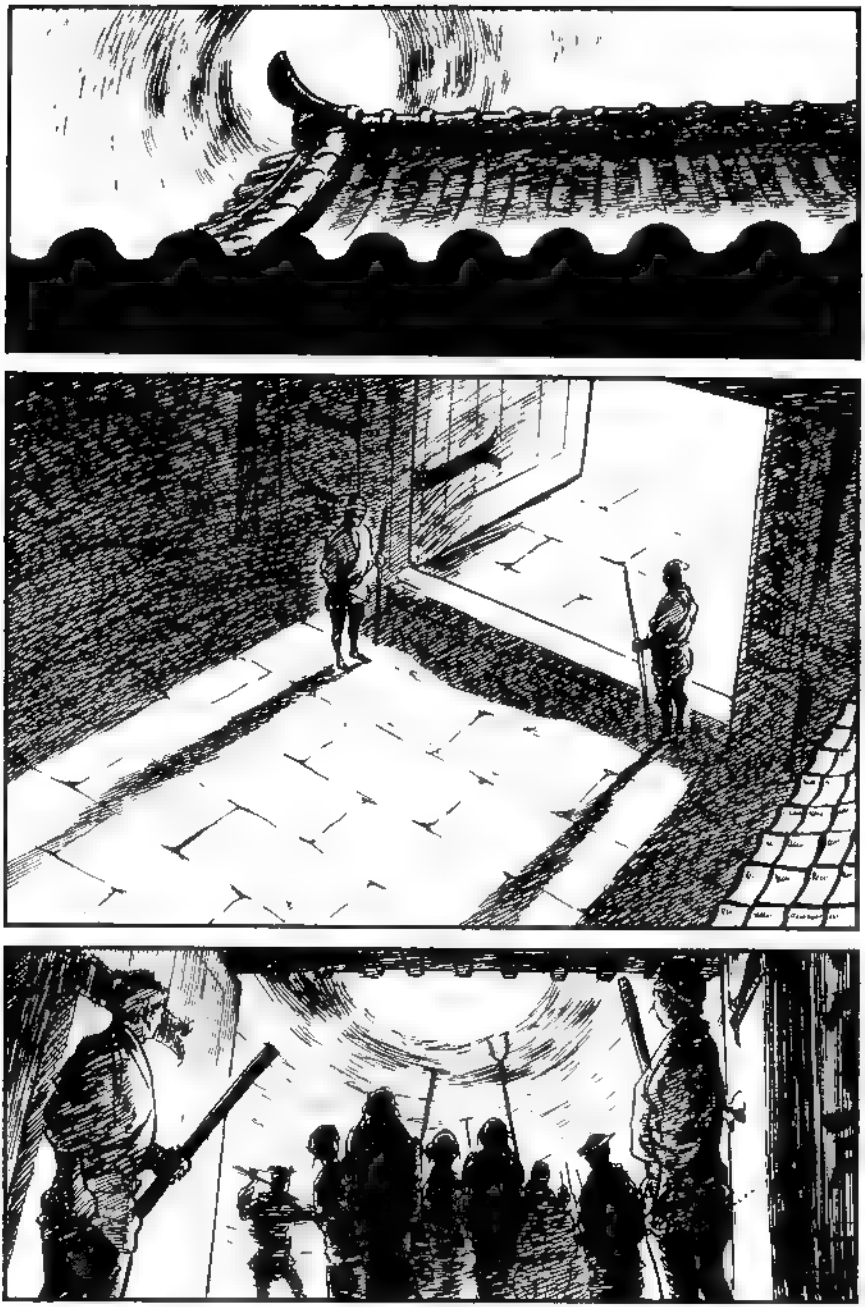
FATHER!!
D-DADDY
MAMA! THEY, THEY .
I KNOW, HONEY I KNOW.
YOUR MAMA, SHE WENT TO PARAISO TEMPLE A FEW STEPS BEFORE US.
WE'RE GOING TOO, HONEY WE'RE GOING TO PARAISO TEMPLE TOGETHER
MAMA'S WAITING FOR US THERE.
MM!

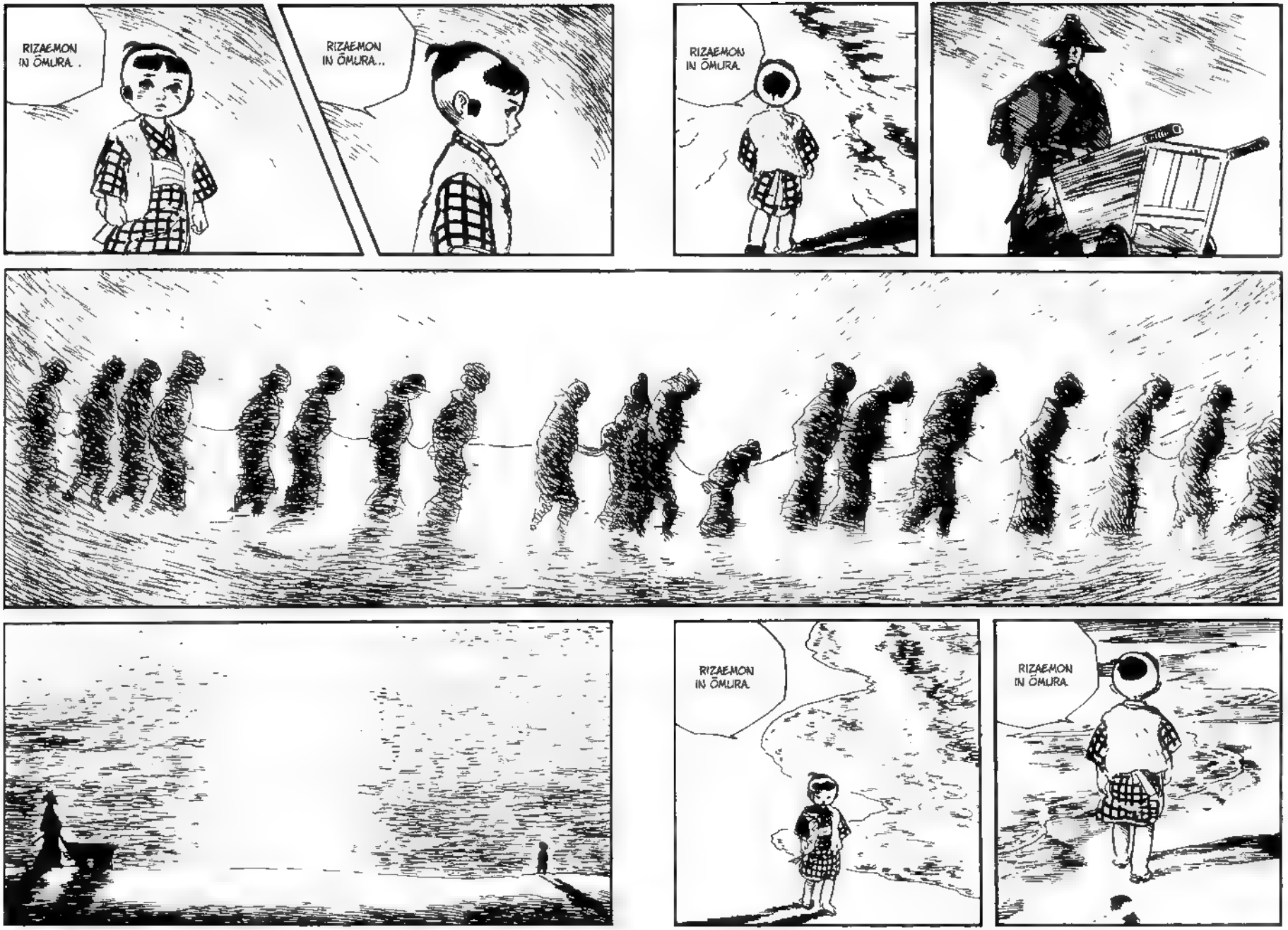
NEXT!
GET UP!

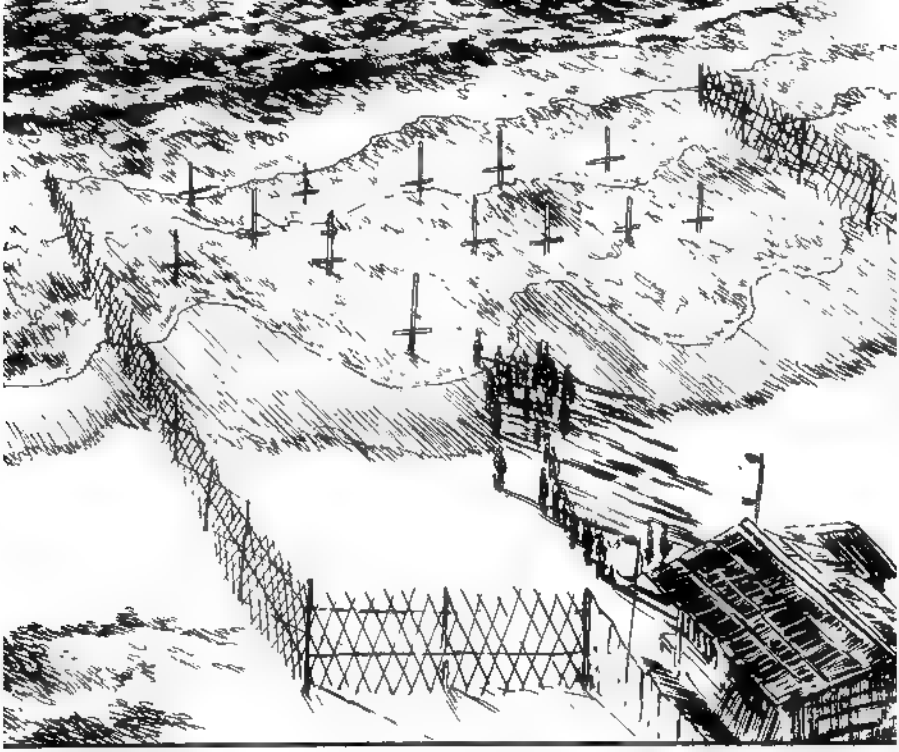
WHAT?! WHO IS THAT BOY
WHERE'D YOU DRAG HIM IN FROM?
S-SIR. HE WAS PLAYING WITH HIRADO'S LITTLE GIRL. HE TRIED TO STOP US, SO
YOU IDIOT! HE'S JUST A PEASANT BRAT!
CAN'T YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?!
ALL RIGHT, YOU- GO! THIS IS NO PLACE FOR YOU. GO HOME!
I SAID GET OUT!

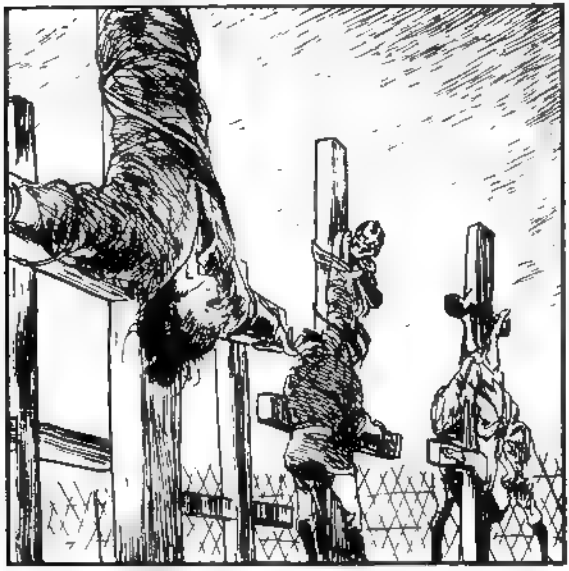
GO HOME, KID
GOL DARN IT! GIT!
KRAK

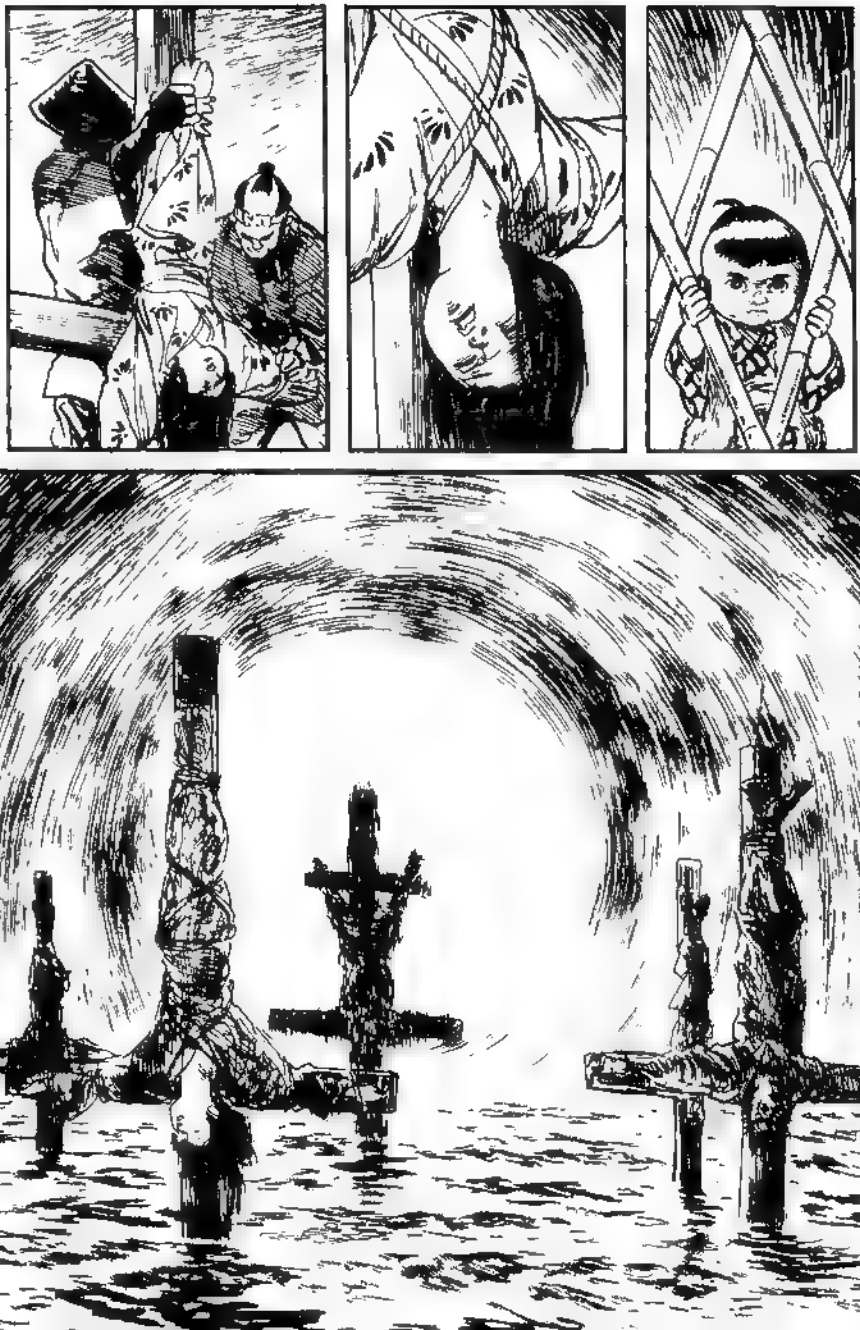

"YOU WANT TO FINISH WHAT SHE ASKED YOU?"
"RIZAEMON, IN ŌMURA."




RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA.
RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA..
RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA.
RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA.
RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA.

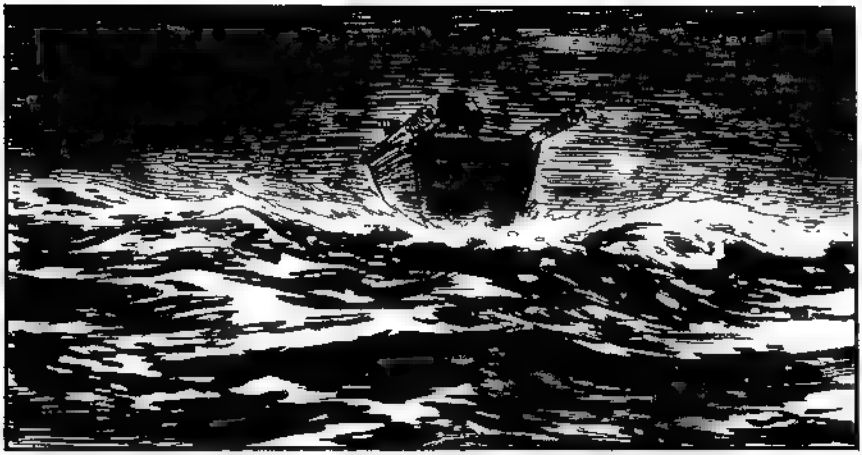


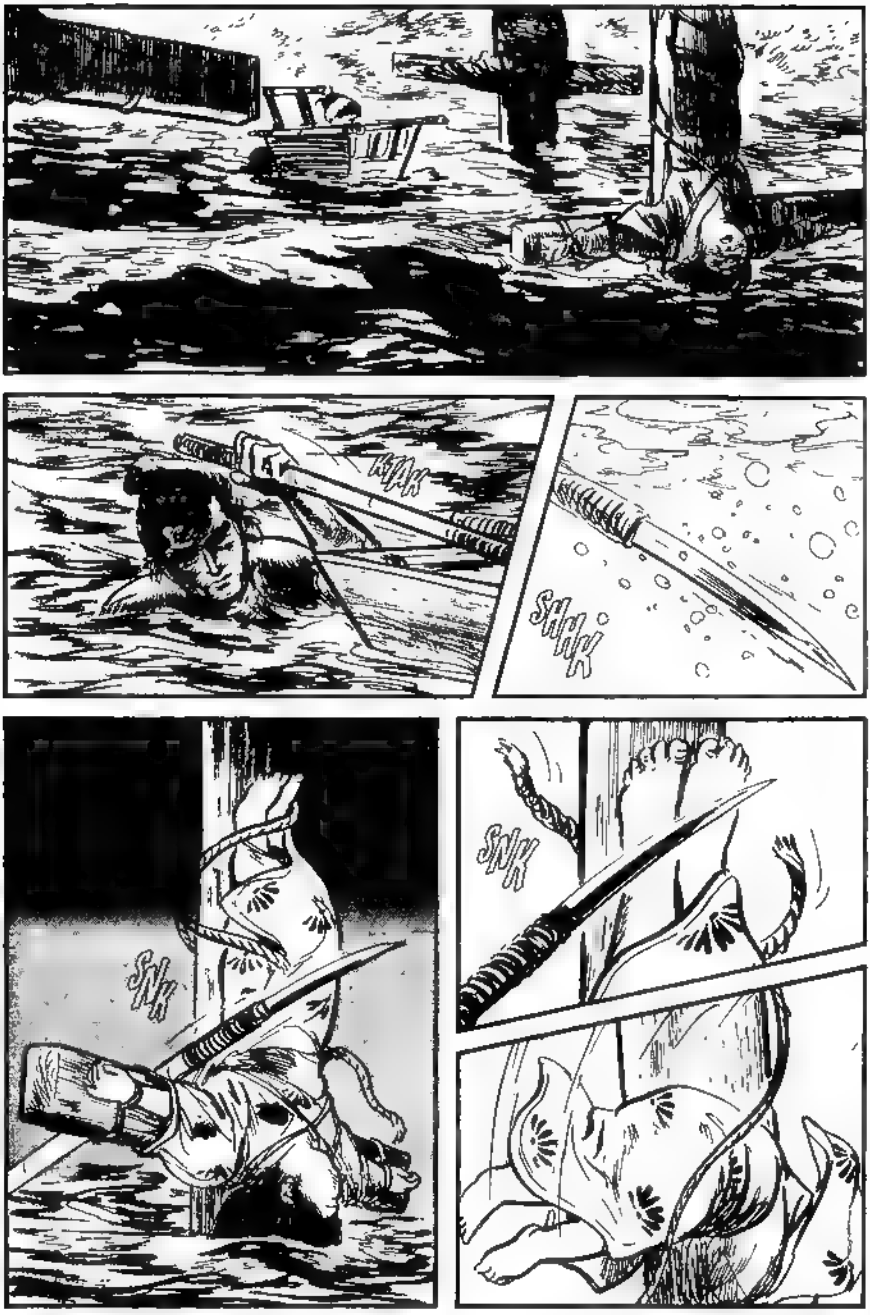




LET US GO
TO PARAISO TEMPLE
THEY CALL IT THE TEMPLE
OF PARADISE
WIDE, NARROW
AHHH!
OMOJO!

OMOYONNH!
LISTEN TO 'EM, THOSE DAMN KIRISHITAN FOOLS! SINGING THEMSELVES TO DEATH!
TO PARAISO TEMPLE
♪ LET US GO ♫
SPLSHH




SHNK
SHNK
SHNK
SHNK

I'M GOING NOW. .TO PARAISO TEMPLE...
TO... PARADISE. .

RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA .
RIZAEMON IN ŌMURA .

TANGO NO SEKKU...THE ANNUAL BOY'S DAY FESTIVAL IN EARLY MAY ON THIS DAY, FAMILIES PRAYED FOR A HAPPY FUTURE. .THEY DROVE THE DEMONS FROM THEIR HOMES. . WHAT DEMONS DID THIS WANDERING FATHER AND SON EXORCISE THIS DAY?
AND THIS OTHER CHILD WORDLESS IN A WOODEN CART .
RIZAEMON.. IN ŌMURA.

LONE WOLF AND CUB BOOK FOURTEEN: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

daikan
The primary local representative of the shogunate in territories outside of the capital of Edo. The Daikan and his staff collected taxes owed to Edo, and oversaw public works, agricultural, and other projects administered by the central government.

daimyō
A feudal lord.

fudai
The *fudai* were *daimyō* who supported Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa shogun, even before the 1600 Battle of Sekigahara that established his reign. Kuroda Yoshitaka, one of the rare Christian *daimyō*, was a trusted advisor to Tokugawa Ieyasu's rival, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. But by the time of Sekigahara, Yoshitaka's son and heir Nagamasa had allied himself with Ieyasu. He was rewarded for his loyalty in the campaigns with sovereignty over Fukuoka *han* in northern Kyūshū, also known as Kuroda *han*.

go-yō
Official business. As a lantern carried by the officers of the *daikan* magistrate, the equivalent of today's national police, or as the shout of the police apprehending a criminal, "*go-yō*" was one of the most dreaded words in the world of Edo Japan's criminal elements.

gundai
Commissioner. In areas administered directly by the shōgunate rather than by a local han, the daikan magistrate was superseded by the gundai, who performed the taxation and law-enforcement duties of the daikan but over a larger territory.

han
A feudal domain.

ikki
A peasant revolt. Japan's downtrodden peasants had almost no recourse in the Edo period. Peasants could travel to Edo to petition the government for relief, but the emissaries and their families would be put to death for their insolence, even when their pleas were accepted. No wonder then that the peasants frequently took matters into their own hands.

kaimyō
Buddhist name, given by a priest at death so the deceased can enter paradise. A person's name in life is their *zokumyō*.

kōgi kaishakunin
The shōgun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shogun.

koku
A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han's* wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

menboho
A face guard, usually worn with a full suit of armor, both for protection and to intimidate one's enemy.

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

meishu
A village chieftain. In Edo Japan, a select handful of *meishu* were assigned official duties by the *machi-bugyō* (Edo city commissioner) and local *daikan* (magistrate). Peasants were forbidden to bear arms and had no family names, but these select few were given special dispensation to wear a sword and pass down their family name.

oku-sama
Term of respect for a wife.

Paraiso
Paradise. The Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier brought Christianity to Japan in 1549, only six years after the first Portuguese traders reached the islands. The religion spread through the southern island of Kyūshū, converting an estimated three hundred thousand believers, and even six *daimyō*. Much of the terminology of early Japanese Christianity, like *Paraiso*, came from Portuguese. In 1587, alarmed by the growing *kirishitan* (Christian) influence in southern Japan and reports of western colonization in other parts of Asia, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the first unifier of Japan, ordered the missionaries out. Twenty-six Christians were crucified in Nagasaki in 1597. After Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated Hideyoshi's son in battle at Sekigahara in 1600 and founded the Tokugawa Shogunate, the persecution of Christians intensified. Fifty-one believers in the southern port city of Nagasaki were killed in 1622, and in time more than three thousand would be tortured to death. The Japanese Inquisition had begun in earnest...

ri
Old unit of measurement. Approximately 4 kilometers (2.5 miles).

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

ryō
A gold piece, worth 60 *monme*.

Sankyō
Three branches of the Tokugawa clan, not in the immediate line of succession.

Seikaidō
Literally, "Land of the Western" Sea. Archaic name for today's Kyūshū.

Shimabara uprising
A popular revolt in the Amakusa Islands near Nagasaki in 1637. It quickly became a Christian uprising under the messianic leader Shimabara Jiro. A shogunate army took Shimabara castle and massacred the rebels in 1638.

Shizume han
A *han* that anchored the Tokugawa presence in often rebellious Kyūshū. The Kurodas led the army that first suppressed Kyūshū's unruly warlords.

shōya
The senior peasant leader, entrusted with local administration by the local *daikan*. See *meishu*.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami)* in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, Crying Freeman, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.